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ABSTRACT

This document, which is intended primarily for European trade union experts who are responsible for further training and education (FTE) and negotiations in the field of further education and training, examines the social dialogue and collective agreements on further training and education at the European, national, and sectoral levels. Presented in chapter 1 are summaries and a comparative analysis of five transnational studies of the following: agreement-based regulations on vocational FTE; new challenges for trade unions in negotiating FTE; and development of company-based FTE in the retail, food, and automobile repair/sales sectors. Chapter 2 discusses examples for company-, sector-, and system-level action in the following fields based on the social dialogue from various countries: FTE and the balance between modernization and social protection; possibilities/limits of FTE in the modernization process; company and individual interests in FTE; and problems with implementing agreements. Chapters 3 and 4 consist of reports on FTE and the social dialogue in the European Union's 12 long-standing member states (Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Spain, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, the United Kingdom) and in its 3 new member states (Austria, Sweden, Finland). Concluding the document is a glossary. (MN)

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Continuous Vocational Training in Europe

Winfried
Heidemann (Ed.)

Documentation on the Social Dialogue

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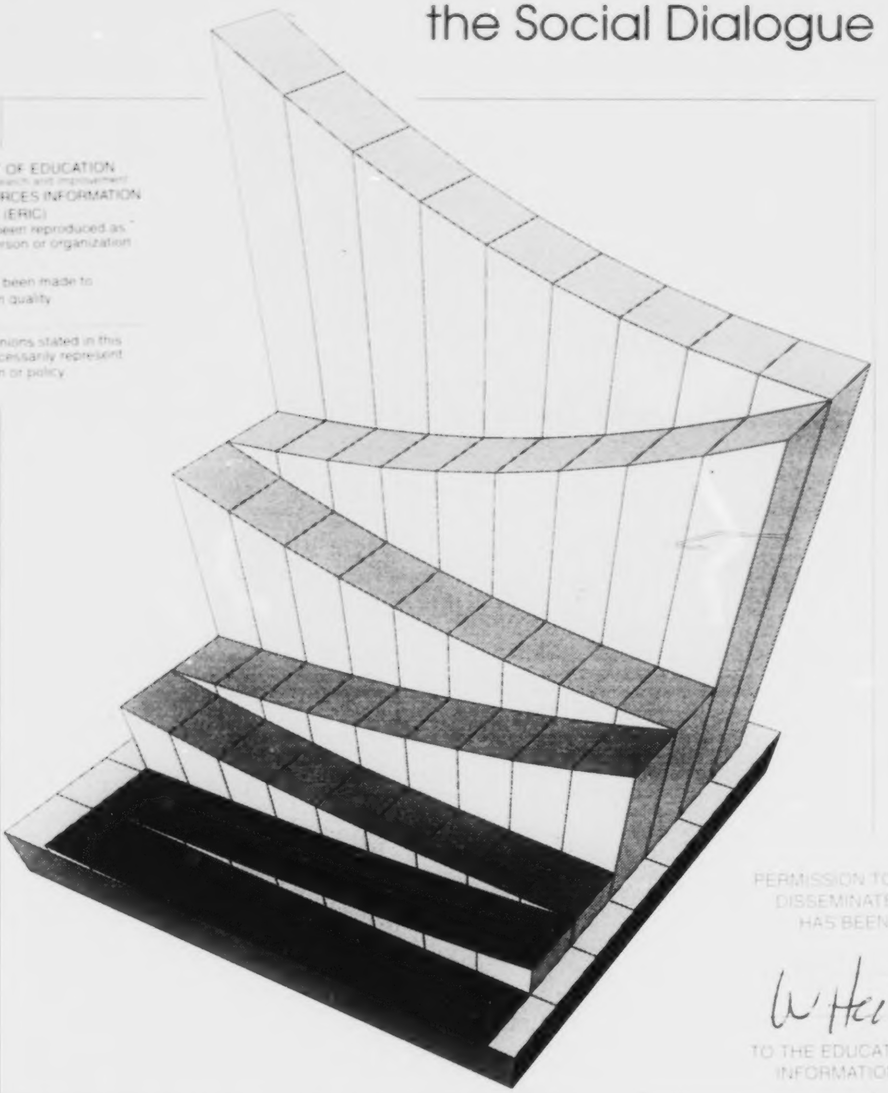

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Continuous Vocational Training in Europe

Documentation on the Social Dialogue

Authors:
Eckehart Ehrenberg
Susanne Felger
Winfried Heidemann
Wilfried Kruse
Angela Paul-Kohlhoff
assisted by Carmen Eccard

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Fore-word

Fore-word

Vocational further training and education is a central component in the social dialogue and in collective agreements in all the countries of Europe. The trade unions are committed to this dialogue and are interested in the transfer of information and experiences from other countries.

In 1992/93, the Hans-Böckler-Stiftung was commissioned by the European Commission within the framework of the FORCE programme to analyse and describe the concepts of the European trade unions and the general debate on the social dialogue in the area of further training and education and to build up a network of further training and education experts. The report on this completed project is now available (Winfried Heinemann / Wilfried Kruse / Angela Paul-Kohlhoff / Christine Zeuner - The social dialogue and further training and education in Europe - new challenges for the trade unions, Berlin 1994). It contains background information on all the member states of the European Union and on the Community level for the development of industrial relations, on the development of further training and education systems, and on the specific standpoints and goals of the trade unions in the field of further training and education policy. Using a comparative European analysis, we then identify six central fields of action for the trade unions in the field of further training and education policy and describe the problem-solving options currently being practiced or discussed in the various countries. It is hoped that the specific way in which this information is presented - by taking the stance of the trade unions and using this as a starting point to assess the developmental prospects of the social dialogue - will help the various European trade unions to better understand the situation and problems in the other European countries and therefore lead to a common understanding of the European dimension of further training and education.

The interest among trade unions in the provision of additional and more detailed information forms the basis for the project "Information on the social dialogue and the collective agreements on further training and education in Europe". Mainly thanks to the stimuli provided by the FORCE programme, many European studies have meanwhile been conducted into the development and regulatory mechanisms of further training and education in the member states and in various different sectors. Nevertheless, one major task still remains - to transfer the findings from these studies and to "process" this information to promote the strategies and activities of employers and trade unions.

This report therefore supplies specific information regarding the results of the social dialogue and collective agreements on further training and education. The primary addressees for this information are the *trade union experts* on European, national and sectoral level who are responsible for further training and education as well as for negotiations in this field. The goal is to "process" the information in such a way that it will be understood and therefore to ensure a genuine transfer of experiences which will not only be of use for the respective national policies but which will also stimulate the debate in the trade unions on the European dimension of vocational training. The information "products" are presented in a way which will help to instil an understanding of problems and problem-solving concepts in other countries in a European context and make them accessible for the readers' own activities. The aim is to overcome the specific difficulties associated with understanding and "processing" information from the context of another country: the practical usefulness of information from other countries depends on the feasibility of (and the ability of the addressee in) comparing own problems and situations with those in other countries. Information from other countries can only be understood and utilised if the reader is willing to examine the context of the other country as well as reflect upon the situation in his or her own country. This specific problem of transferability is looked at in detail in the concluding remarks of Chapter 2.

This project report contains the following products:

1. **Summary of the transnational studies** on further training and education from the FORCE programme.

Five transnational studies on further training and education comprising all 12 member states have been conducted within the framework of the FORCE programme: two studies on the social dialogue and collective agreements, and three studies on the situation in different economic sectors. The studies which look at *collective agreements* are

- Agreement-based regulations on vocational further training and education" (Leuven University), which provides an overall picture of contractual policy on the basis of the national reports and which also points to interesting problem-solving concepts;
- The social dialogue on further training and education in Europe - new challenges for the trade unions" (Hans-Böckler-Stiftung Düsseldorf / Sozialforschungsstelle Dortmund), which - as already mentioned - looks at the points of view of the trade unions and the preconditions for the social dialogue on the part of the trade unions.

The *sectoral studies* are studies which are based on national sub-reports and describe the development of company-based further training and education in three sectors:

- further training and education in the *retail sector*
- vocational further training and education in the *food industry*
- employment, work and vocational training in the European *automobile repair and sales sector.*

The *findings* of these five studies are *summarised* in *two different ways:*

- brief overviews for each of the five studies,
- followed by a comparative overview of the common findings of all studies which “compresses” the findings into six topics.

2. **Examples for action based on the social dialogue** from various countries.

This product comprises examples of four fields of action for trade union further training and education policy in the social dialogue and on three levels of action. Each example comes from a different country and portrays the specific context and findings with regard to a possible transfer of experiences to other countries or to the European level.

Fields of action:

- further training and education between modernisation and social protection,
- possibilities and limits of further training and education in the modernisation process,
- company and individual interests in further training and education,
- problems with the implementation of agreements.

Levels of action:

- further training and education on company level,
- further training and education on sector level,
- further training and education as an overall system.

3. **Dossiers on the situation with regard to further training and education and the social dialogue** in the (previously) 12 member states and on European level. These are supplements to and updates of the portrayals contained in the aforementioned publication of the Hans-Böckler-Stiftung.

4. **Dossiers** containing basic information on further training and education and the social dialogue in the **three new member states** of the European Union: Finland, Austria and Sweden.

5. A **glossary** with important keywords on further training and education and the social dialogue in Europe as used in the evaluated studies.

The general "theme" of the information products is not further training and education as such, but *continuous vocational training in the social dialogue.* There is no uniform European definition of the concept of "social dialogue". This concept is associated with different ideas, expectations and experiences, depending on the national context. On European level, the term "social dialogue" characterises the dialogue between the leading representatives of the European employers and trade unions as well as the EC Commission as laid down as an *institution with European constitutional status* in Article 118b of the Single European Act/the valid Maastricht Treaty. This dialogue is based on the French model of the inclusion of employers and trade unions in the effort to reach consensus on political issues; in this model, the dialogue culminates in a bilateral agreement between employers and trade unions (or, if the government is included, a tripartite agreement). In a *more general sense,* the social dialogue is taken to include all discussions between employees and employers on company, regional, sectoral, national or European level. The *collective agreements* in the sectors or industries are also a form of social dialogue culminating in a (limited) agreement on the regulation of various questions, such as working conditions, wages or further training and education. In all countries, there is a dialogue between employers and trade unions on questions of further training and education; these dialogues may vary in intensity, may be extremely formal or casual, and may take place on different levels. However, binding agreements on further training and education are still very rare. Among the employers' federations, there is a general feeling that dialogue is more or less an end in itself and does not need to be followed up by binding agreements; from the point of view of the trade unions, on the other hand, a minimum degree of obligation is seen as being necessary if they are to perform their protective and creative function.

The choice of examples used in the following chapters of this project is initially based on a more general understanding of *social dialogue,* as practiced in various institutional forms in the various member states. The examples are therefore not limited to the formal procedures on European level. In all the examples, however, either the practices are based on a formalised legal or contractual foundation, or the trade unions conduct the dialogue with the aim of negotiating agreements which stipulate certain obligations with the aim of securing further training and education on a collective basis.

Continuous Vocational Traning in Europe - Dokumentation on the Social Dialogue

Chapter 1

Summary of five FORCE-Studies

Continuous Vocational Traning in Europe - Dokumentation on the Social Dialogue

Introduction to Chapter 1

The FORCE Programme of the European Community was, between 1991 and 1994, was a programme of action geared towards the promotion of further vocational training and education. Its central objective was to promote cooperation with companies, educational institutes and other institutions on a transnational basis with the aim of improving cooperation in the field of further training and education in Europe.

In this way, it is hoped that the FORCE projects will promote the transfer of knowledge, experience and know-how throughout the EU and thus engender a mutual understanding for the special features of the various countries. In general, there is a need for greater discussion and debate on the topic of further training and education within the EU aimed at the transnational development of further training and education. Alongside the promotion measures directly connected with the development and implementation of further training and education, the FORCE programme also comprises comparative European studies which deal with some of the central issues. Some of these studies are concerned with further training and education in specific industrial sectors whilst others look at the existing collective agreements in the field of further training and education.

In all stages of the FORCE Programme, suitable dialogue methods ensure that research work also incorporates the standpoints of the employers and the trade unions. This means that the two sides have a say in the choice of promotion-worthy projects; it also means that their opinions on further training and education are fully taken into account and that they have adequate opportunity to respond to the findings of the projects.

The following sections provide a brief overview of the studies conducted in the 12 member states within the framework of the FORCE Programme, comprising two trans-sectoral studies on collective agreements as well as the completed sectoral studies on the retail, food, and automobile repair and distribution sectors.

We first provide a brief overview of the individual studies (chapter 1.1) and then portray the common findings for all five studies on a comparative basis (chapter 1.2).

All Europe-wide evaluations from the FORCE Programme - with the exception of the study entitled “Collective agreements on further training and education - counselling and information in the area of the European trade unions” - are based on the various national studies.

Continuous Vocational Traning in Europe - Dokumentation on the Social Dialogue

Chapter 1.1

Overview of the five individual FORCE studies

1. Studies on collective agreements

1.1 Contractual policies concerning continued vocational training

Methodological Approach

The study conducted by the University of Leuven was based on an integrated approach - in other words, it deals with "... the educational system as a whole, the objectives of the government and the social partners concerning vocational training and especially CVT and the industrial relations system of the given country as a whole..." (p. 6).

The project consisted of secondary analyses of earlier studies as well as primarily empirical surveys and took account of developments at national, sectoral and company level. No representative findings were presented. The objective was to provide an overall picture of collective agreement policy and to underline approaches which were considered to be of interest for the future.

Structure of the final report

The study is divided into two main parts, preceded by an overview of the goals and strategies pursued by the twelve national governments, employers' organisations and trade unions in the field of vocational further training and education.

The first section looks at the basic forms of agreement (collective agreements and other forms of joint action) and takes a comparative look at the joint activities of employers and trade unions in the field of vocational further training and education. The study analyses the implementation and the effects of the agreement-based stipulations on all three negotiating levels.

The second section examines the part such agreements play in the organisation of vocational training. Particular importance is attached to the question of how to motivate employers and employees to become active in the field of vocational further training and education. This section also examines proven approaches to and methods of vocational further training and education.

The study then summarises the most important findings.

Summary of the most important findings

The governments, the employers' organisations and the trade unions in the twelve member states agree on the central importance of vocational further training and education. Nevertheless, there are marked differences in their goals and strategies.

The standpoints and strategies of the national governments range from the view that vocational further training and education is the sole responsibility of the employers (IRL, GB), through the claim that employers and trade unions must play the central role in this field with only subsidiary back-up from the government (NL, L, D) to the opinion that both the state on the one hand and the employers and trade unions on the other are independent, neo-corporative actors in the field of further training and education (B, DK, F, GR, I, P, E).

The state plays a central role in Belgium, Denmark, France and Spain, and the governments in these countries generally endeavour to cooperate with employers and trade unions in the organisation and regulation of further training and education.

There are various models for the funding of company-based further training and education. Alongside strictly company-based funding, the most important funding methods are compulsory subscriptions based on a percent of the total payroll and/or paid into a special fund (B, DK, F) or compulsory subscriptions laid down in (individual) sectoral agreements (D, I, E, NL, GB). In some cases, employees are expected to bear a part of the costs (in the form of monetary payment or leisure time sacrifice).

Vocational further training and education is basically geared towards providing the economy with the necessary qualifications and/or promoting minority groups and integrating them in the labour market. The promotion of minorities is particularly emphasised in B, F, BR, I, E, NL, GB.

The employers in all the member states consider vocational training to be an element of management decision-making competence and see the organisation of further training and education as being part and parcel of personnel development measures.

Employers generally support a further training and education system which is adapted to suit the laws of the market and which assigns responsibility for the organisation of further training and education at company level to the management. Their willingness to conclude or accept collective further training agreements at sectoral or national level varies greatly from country to country. Many national employers' federations reject certain forms of an individual right to further training and education (e.g. training leave).

The trade unions generally do not see vocational further training and education as being a "freely tradable product" on the market. They all demand an individual right to further vocational training and education which is free of charge and which takes place during working hours. They demand more influence on all levels with regard to decisions on contents, organisation and administration (including financing) of further training and education.

The range and effectiveness of agreements in the field of further training and education (as in other areas) in the individual countries depends on the extent to which the national system makes provision for industrial relations.

An analysis of employee participation in this area in the various member states shows a confusing variety of practices. It is, however, possible to differentiate between the following "regulation levels":

(1) Regulations in *collective agreements:*

In the majority of member countries, collective agreements are the central factor in the fixing of wages and working conditions. The legal frameworks (right/obligation to negotiate) and the organisational options on the various negotiating levels differ markedly from country to country, however. Regulation options end where company decision-making processes begin. The normative part of a collective agreement lays down compulsory minimum standards in all countries apart from GB and IRL.

(2) *Participation of employee-representing bodies:*

These include the employee representatives at company level (e.g. supervisory or administrative boards) as well as the employee councils. In most member countries there are legal regulations which stipulate various forms of employee participation in the relevant processes.

Works councils are the most common form of employee participation, although they can vary greatly in terms of composition and powers (rights to information, advisory rights, co-determination rights). Works councils are active on company, corporate or group level. Employee councils at European level are still the exception rather than the rule.

The study concludes that collective agreements on national, trans-sectoral or sectoral level (B, D, F, GR, I, L, P, E and NL) are the most common form of participation. Germany and France are the only countries in which agreements on vocational training exist on corporate and company level. In some countries, formal collective agreements play only a secondary role in the stipulations on vocational training (e.g. DK, D).

The most wide-ranging system for the joint organisation of vocational further training and education by employers and trade unions was found in France. This system is based on collective agreements which are subsequently incorporated in the labour statutes and is characterised by:

- a compulsory levy on employers (1.5% of the payroll)
- financial contributions from the employees

- the individual right of employees to further training and education
- a negotiating obligation on employers on trade unions and wide-ranging advisory rights for employee representatives

The collective agreements on sectoral level have promoted the conclusion of trans-sectoral agreements and national legislation. In France, the employers and the trade unions play a central role in the development of vocational further training and education policy.

With regard to the differences in the collective agreement-based organisation of vocational training, there are marked variations from sector to sector. The magnitude of investment in further training and education is greatly influenced by factors such as the size of the company, the percentage of qualified employees and the degree of unionisation.

Collective agreements make a major contribution to vocational further training and education by:

(1) motivating the companies to become active in the field of further training and education. The following (compulsory) regulations are geared to ensuring this commitment:

- payment of a percentage of the payroll (F, E, GR)
- obligatory negotiations between employers and trade unions on questions of further training and education (F)
- financial assistance for small and medium-sized companies to minimise the expense of substitution for the employees taking part in further training measures (B, DK)
- sanctions against employees who refuse to take part in further training measures and the requirement that employees who leave the company prematurely pay back the costs (E).

(2) motivating employees to take part in further training and education measures. This purpose is served by (controversial) models which grant employees the right to a certain period of time for further training and education (e.g. training leave) and by incentives for those involved in further training and education in the form of higher wages, promotion, improved prospects on the labour market, greater job security etc.

A comparative assessment of the further training and education measures and systems which are considered exemplary by employers and trade unions in the 12 member countries provides us with four different "country types":

- countries without any effective joint action of employers and unions based on collective agreements (GB, IRL)
- countries in which there is joint action - mainly within the framework of statutory institutions but not backed up by negotiations (DK)
- countries in which - in addition to joint action within a legally stipulated framework - there are an increasing number of collective agreements in this field (D, GR, P, E, I)
- countries in which joint action within a legally stipulated framework goes hand in hand with with wide-ranging trans-sectoral (B, F) or sector-based (NL) collective agreements.

On the whole, agreements on vocational further training and education on trans-sectoral and sectoral level are becoming increasingly important. This is not the case, however, on company level, as vocational training is one of the most important instruments in the field of personnel planning and is therefore viewed by employers as an area in which the decision-making powers lie with the management.

1.2 Collective agreements on further training and education - counselling and information in the European trade union sector

Methodological approach

In contrast to the objectives of the research project carried out at the University of Leuven, the study conducted by the Hans-Böckler-Stiftung and the Landesinstitut Sozialforschungsstelle Dortmund (Dortmund Social Research Centre) is geared towards analysing the specific viewpoints and preconditions for a "social dialogue" from the point of view of the trade unions and for the conclusion of collective agreements between employers and trade unions.

In the first phase, work was aimed at identifying the structures and trends of industrial relations, collective agreements and vocational further training at national level in the twelve member states. This investigation was supported by evaluation of the relevant literature and a written survey among ETUC representatives in the European Social Dialogue and in the "Education and Vocational Training" advisory committee of the EU Commission.

In the second work phase, the presentations of the national reports of the research project at the University of Leuven (cp. section 1.1) were evaluated in the national FORCE bodies. In the wake of these presentations, discussions were held with representatives of the trade unions and union federations of all twelve countries.

In a third phase, the intermediate findings of the project were discussed in a workshop with representatives of the unions in the consultative bodies of the ETUC and the EU as well as with further experts from the sector unions.

In the fourth phase, the conditions for the social dialogue were defined in four countries - Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom, mainly through in-depth discussions with union representatives from the said countries.

In the final phase, the final report of the project was discussed with union experts at a workshop before it was revised.

Structure of the final report

The final report describes the findings of our investigations and our discussions with union representatives on the conditions of the social dialogue on further training and education in the member states of the EU. The country reports provide basic information on the situation in the various countries and are subdivided into the sections "Initial situation", "Development of industrial relations and their importance for further training and education policy", "Trends in further training and education policy", and "Approaches to and outlook for trade union further training and education policy".

A separate section analyses the social dialogue and the collective agreements on European level.

This is followed by a comparative European assessment of the general situation with an overview of developmental trends in the ield of vocational further training and education within the context of industrial relations. This section generates central fields of action for the unions as well as describing the problems they face within the framework of the social dialogue and shows ways in which solutions can be developed to tackle these problems.

Summary of the most important findings

First, a comparative European view is employed to portray the important developmental trends within the framework of industrial relations in Europe. Widely varying forms of industrial relations have developed in the various member states, and there are major differences with regard to the influence of employers and trade unions on the concrete regulation of the working environment in the various countries. The main differences concern the scope granted by the state for the organisation of general tasks and the degree to which employers and trade unions make use of the options at their disposal. In the field of further training and education these differences are reflected by the varying degrees to which the national trade unions and employers view the state and the political parties as negotiating partners in the organisation of further training and education.

The following developmental trends in industrial relations appear to be of particular significance for the field of further training and education:

- One noticeable trend in Europe is that we are seeing an increasing number of qualitative or non-material issues alongside the traditional material negotiating topics in negotiations between employers and trade unions. One of the central non-material topics throughout Europe is the field of further training and education.
- Trends on the industrial relations front are characterised by deregulation - in varying degrees from country to country, and sometimes of a contradictory nature.
- There is also a Europe-wide trend towards the withdrawal of the state from welfare state activities. The national trade unions react differently to this trend, as can be seen from their activities in the field of further training and education. Their reactions range from a willingness to take on these previously state-performed tasks, through the joint demand of trade unions and employers that the state should step up its activities in this area, to joint efforts by trade unions and employers geared towards involving the state in joint agreements with the aim of securing any progress that is made.
- In the wake of the widely observed "crisis of the welfare state", there is a European trend towards a greater willingness on the part of the trade unions to accept part of the responsibility for economic stability by approving "modernisation". In the field of further training and education, this is leading to a shift in trade union commitment away from further training and education for risk groups on the labour market and towards securing further training and education within the context of intra-company modernisation processes. The national strategies in this area differ markedly, however.
- In the wake of social and economic upheaval in Europe, the trade unions are faced with the necessity to reorganise their structures and reformulate their strategies. There is, however, no overall trend towards weaker trade unions in Europe. On the contrary; there are indications that the trade unions are gaining greater influence in some countries and in certain policy spheres. In the field of vocational training, we can observe convergence of the policies of the different unions and widespread stimuli for change in the systems of industrial relations.

Four central trends were discerned with regard to the development of vocational further training and education in Europe:

- There is a wide variety of contractual agreements on further training and education in Europe. There are laws on further training and education, as well as different types of national or regional agreements (between employers and trade unions, and between the employers, the trade unions and the government in power). Autonomous agreements on further training and education have been concluded at company level in all the EC countries. What becomes obvious is that collective agreement-based regulations on the one hand and official state regulations on the other are not alternatives but that they presuppose one another.

- Further training and education is related to various functional areas which we find in all European countries with differing degrees of accentuation. From the point of view of the individual participant, we can distinguish between promotion-oriented further training and education, adaptation-oriented further training and education, retraining and training and educational measures geared towards integration in the labour market. From the point of view of society, further training and education has the following functions: an instrument of labour market policy, further training and education in connection with intra-company modernisation, and individually chosen vocational further training and education.

- These functional areas of further training and education are emphasised to differing degrees by the trade unions. In most countries, the trade unions attach central importance to questions of further training and education within the context of state labour market policy. Moreover, the field of intra-company further training is becoming more and more significant, as it is increasingly being used as an instrument to influence intra-company modernisation processes. In countries in which the vocational training system is hardly regulated and/or "de-coupled" from the labour market, employers and trade unions are particularly active in the field of further training and education.

- Various different models for the funding of vocational further training and education have been developed in Europe. They range from state funding (through tax revenue or via the social insurance system), through fund-based financing by the employers or models for employee-based financing, to co-investment schemes. Co-investment models in which the employers make a financial contribution and the employees contribute either in the form of money or through the sacrifice of leisure time are becoming increasingly widespread. The question of influence on the financing of further training and education measures and on the utilisation of the monies in the relevant funds is becoming an increasingly important area for the trade unions.

On the basis of the findings of the study, there are outlined six central areas of action for trade union further training and education policy - including the ascertained problems and approaches towards solving these problems - which are of relevance in all the countries of the EU:

- The organisation of further training and education between economic modernisation, social protection and promotion of opportunities for risk groups on the labour market.
- Critical appraisal of the possibilities and limits of further training and education within the context of modernisation.
- The safeguarding not only of company interests but also of individual interests with regard to further training and education.
- Involvement in the determination of need and the implementation of concrete further training and education measures at company level.
- The perception of extended further training and education opportunities by employees
- Critical appraisal of the training and education measures organised by the trade unions themselves.

2. Sectoral studies

The aim of the sector-specific studies on further training and education in Europe which were compiled within the framework of the FORCE Programme is to identify developmental trends in the field of further training and education in the respective industrial sectors. This information will be made available to employers, trade unions and other organisations in the sectors in question, as well as to administrative authorities and educational organisations and the European organisations of employers and trade unions. It is hoped that this information will serve to promote the social dialogue on methods and requirements in the field of further training and education at both national and European level. We also identify, analyse and propagate particularly interesting methods of vocational further training and education which have been developed in companies in the EU countries (so-called "best practice" cases). One topic which is of special interest is the specific relationship between the changing business strategies and goals of companies on the one hand and the further training and education measures pursued by these companies on the other.

The European sectoral studies are based on twelve national studies concerning the economic sector in question. The findings are summarised in a comparative European overview and assessed in this context.

The sectoral studies on the retail trade and the food sector are both divided into two main sections. The first section looks at the general developmental conditions of the sector in question and the further training and education measures policies pursued in this sector (economic structures and developmental trends, organisation of industrial relations, employment and training situation in the sector companies). The second part contains a comparative analysis of the relevant case studies. The sectoral studies are rounded off by a summary containing a comparative assessment of the findings of both sections as well as a portrayal of the areas in which problems exist and action is called for. The automobile sector study is structured differently from the other two sectoral studies.

2.1 Further training and education in the retail trade

Methodological Approach

The research methods used in the sectoral study "Further training and education in the retail trade" correspond to those employed for the sectoral studies of the FORCE Programme.

For the second part of the study, 55 companies from the twelve member states were surveyed and systematically evaluated.

The sample included companies with "best practice" experience as well as companies which were more representative of the real situation in the twelve countries. In other words, the sample was not representative from a statistical point of view.

"The overall report is an attempt to create a balance between the reality as it appears to us and new future-oriented experiences, which we hope will portray coming trends and provide us with an insight into future developments" (p. 6 - German version).

Structure of the final report

The first part of the final report provides a comparative overview of the conditions in the various EU countries and of the recognisable developmental trends (historical development, the effects of modernisation processes, causes of similar/differing development, employment rates, employment structure and conditions, vocational training and recruitment criteria). Basic information on the situation in the field of further training and education in the retail sector is provided in the form of very brief country reports.

The second section evaluates the cases studies and provides a comparative overview of the various aspects of vocational further training and education in the retail sector in Europe. It also describes concrete problem-solving approaches adopted by national companies. The following aspects are systematically addressed:

- assessment of market situation and sales concepts
- organisation of further training and education (also in multinational companies)
- the different target groups for further training and education measures
- the need for further training and education and the corresponding programmes
- access to further training and education measures and
- the effects of intra-company forms of organisation on further training and education.

This is followed by a summary of the two sections. The "Key issues" section serves to underline the conclusions of the survey and to identify and define areas in which action is called for.

Summary of the most important findings

The study arrives at the conclusion that, in general terms, the modern development of organisational structures in the retail trade has passed through four phases: from the appearance of the first department stores (at the end of the 19th century), through the development of store chains, chain stores and cooperatives (turn of the century) and the rapid spread of self-service stores (i.e. supermarkets and hypermarkets - since the fifties) to a fourth developmental stage.

This fourth stage is characterised by diversification of structures, products and sales strategies; in other words, extensive specialisation in specific product and customer sectors as well as greater orientation towards quality and service and the creation of a corporate image.

Due to their different backgrounds and developmental influences, today's retail sectors in the countries of Europe are at different stages on the developmental chart. Some national retail sectors are just beginning to introduce self-service stores, whilst others have already reached the fourth stage.

One general finding is that the employment structure in the retail trade and the type of further training and education measures that exist in this sector depend more on the prevailing retail and sales concept than on company size and national traditions.

In spite of varying national conditions, the employment situations in the retailing sectors of the different European countries possess similar characteristics.

Over the last few decades, the overall employment trend in this sector has been positive in the various countries of Europe. The jobs created by expansion in this sector have outnumbered the jobs destroyed by increased productivity.

There has been an overall increase in part-time work, and ongoing concentration has resulted in a drastic decrease in the number of independent shops and stores.

The characteristic features of this sector are the high percentages of women and youths it employs, the high rate of fluctuation, and the frequency of seasonal and temporary employment.

The general level of education of those employed in the retail sector is comparatively low, with the exception of those employees in countries which operate a well-developed system of initial vocational training and with the exception of management employees in general.

It is clear that the transition to the fourth stage leads to changes in intra-company further training and education policy as well as in the area of personnel policy. There is a closer relationship connection between business objectives and intra-company training objectives, since the emphasis on quality and service calls for a more motivated and well-informed staff.

The case studies show that the most progressive companies are adopting new strategies which can be described as "post-self-service" strategies. These strategies are geared towards combining the advantages of the self-service concept with those of personal service, and the further training and education of sales personnel (not only of management personnel) is becoming one of focal points of company strategy. This training serves to impart wide-ranging product knowledge as well as attitudes and behaviour which are in line with the corporate image. In such companies, further training and education is no longer a marginal activity, and further training becomes an important part of personnel development and therefore of overall business strategy.

There are also major differences in the way in which companies plan and organise further training and education, particularly when it comes to ascertaining the need for such measures. The co-determination options of the trade union and employee representatives also depend on the national legislation. The influence of legislation generally appears to be greater where initial vocational training and further training and education on institutional level is concerned than on company level.

In the progressive companies, the "new" importance of further training and education has led to extensive reorganisation of the field of further training and education. Training centres and further training departments are being created. 88 % of the companies surveyed have only operated a further training and education department since 1985.

There appears to be a strong trend towards intra-company further training and education measures; in other words, further training and education is increasingly seen as the responsibility of the company rather than of external "providers" and training/educational institutes (although this trend is not as strong in countries with a dual system of education and training). This trend often goes hand in hand with decentralisation of responsibility for further training and education and thus entails the risk of a "priority conflict" between further training and education on the one hand and short-term economic goals on the other.

The analysis of target groups for - and access to - further training and education also reflects these changing trends. Although they are generally considered to be of little significance for the area of further training and education, the proprietors of small, independent stores are becoming increasingly important. For these retailers, participation in further training and education is playing an ever-more important key role in the survival of the company.

The bigger food stores also organise further training and education measures for their sales personnel, whilst such measures are found less frequently in supermarkets and hypermarkets.

Check-out personnel participate to only a minor degree in further training and education measures, whilst warehouse employees are the employees who undergo the least further training.

There are still only very few concepts for the further training and education of part-time employees or for systematic promotion training of female employees.

The findings of the study do not allow us to quantify the results, however.

Whilst voluntary participation in further training and education measures (generally at the suggestion of the management) is still predominant, the picture will change in the years to come once the new further training and education strategies have been implemented. The new measures are aimed at all employees, and this will more or less mean compulsory participation.

The contents and methods of further training and education reflect the reorientation of business strategy. The new further training measures focus on product knowledge and sales techniques. Despite their importance in everyday company operations, new technologies play only a subordinate role. The authors believe that this is above all due to the fact that the information systems involved are becoming increasingly easy to use. Training programmes are mostly of modular structure, and most training methods are geared towards the application of newly acquired knowledge and skills in the everyday work of employees.

The cases studies provided little or no information on the cost and effectiveness of further training and education. It is generally the case, however, that expenditure on further training and education in the retail sector is far lower than the national average for all sectors, and that big companies invest more in further training and education than smaller companies. There is also a trend towards higher training and education expenditure in the retail sector.

2.2 Sectoral study on experiences with vocational further training in the food sector.

Methodological Approach

The research methods used in the sectoral study also correspond to those outlined in 1.2. The study was based on the evaluation of the national sectoral studies and on the compilation and evaluation of 55 cases studies from the same number of companies in the food sector in the twelve member states of the EU.

Between 2 and 6 companies were selected from each European country. The aim was to achieve a company sample which reflected the variety of the food and luxury foodstuffs sector in terms of sub-sectors, company size, degree of automation, trading status and geographic location was well as with regard to the differences in economic context.

Only companies which organised further training and education measures were selected; for this reason alone, the sample cannot be considered representative.

The 55 case studies were evaluated in a comparative analysis and used as a basis for deriving problem areas and fields of action in the field of further training and education in the food and luxury foodstuffs industry.

Structure of the final report

The study portrays general developmental trends as well as the common features of - and differences between - the various countries and sub-sectors. Special attention is paid to characteristics which arise from the special nature of the food sector.

The final report shows the familiar three-way structure of the sectoral studies:

- The sectoral environment is analysed to indicate the general framework of development for the companies in this sector. This analysis looks at the "economic" dimension (market, product, marketing strategies, technology, regulations ...), the "employment" dimension (structure of qualification, percentage of men/women, types of employment contract ...) and the "training" dimension (further training and education activities, target group, role of employers and trade unions ...). This section also contains brief country reports.
- A comparative analysis of the 55 case studies serves to outline the general developmental trends in the fields of work organisation, economic development and further training and education in this sector as well as (in particular) common and divergent developments within the individual companies.
- This is followed by a final section which identifies the key issues, which are to be presented to the European employers and trade unions, the national authorities, the Commission and CEDEFOP as topics for further in-depth consideration.

The study underlines the general developmental trends as well as the common and divergent features of the various countries and sectors. Special attention is paid to characteristics which arise from the special nature of the food sector.

Summary of the most important findings

The food and luxury foodstuffs sector plays an important role in Europe. In all the countries of the EU, this sector is a major economic factor and employs large numbers of people and is currently undergoing a far-reaching process of reorganisation. Moreover, this sector caters to the basic requirements of the population and is subject to strict consumer and health protection regulations due to the fact that the raw materials it uses and the products it markets are highly perishable. Some sub-sectors of the food sector are additionally subject to seasonal influences.

The economic and legal framework in which this sector operates is determined above all by the intervention policies of the EU and by the policies of the respective national governments (market regulation, consumer protection etc.).

On the whole, the food sector is a highly heterogeneous sector. There are also marked differences in the various sub-sectors, some of which are oriented toward agricultural operations (processing of raw materials) whilst others are geared towards customer needs (further processing).

The national consumer markets for food and luxury foodstuffs in the EU are still characterised by a high level of variety. The overall consumption of food and luxury foodstuffs is currently increasing so slowly it could be said to be stagnating. This is above all the case in the more northerly member states. This does not mean, however, that there are not some sub-sectors which are characterised by a high level of dynamism. Some markets are declining or stagnating whilst others (pre-cooked meals, for example) are expanding in response to changing consumer demands.

National eating habits also influence the development of individual market segments. Decreasing income differentials, broader communication and a wider range of travel options are increasingly leading to convergence of eating habits. A traditional spread of northerly eating habits to the southern countries underpins this trend. One common characteristic of all consumers in Europe is that they demand high food quality in combination with convenience of consumption.

The great majority of manufacturers in this sector are small and medium-sized companies - this is particularly the case in the southern member states - whilst big companies and multinational corporations dominate the food sector in countries such as Great Britain, France and Denmark. There is a clear overall trend towards concentration of the food industry in Europe. Big companies are endeavouring to gain a foothold in several markets whilst smaller companies are withdrawing from the sector. In the period prior to the introduction of the Single European Market, there was a glut of cross-border mergers as well as takeovers by big companies.

Numerous developments in the food sector can be traced back to restructuring in the retail sector and to the increasing quality consciousness of the end consumers. The process of concentration in the retail trade has strengthened the market position of the supermarket chains, and these chains can command a great deal of negotiating muscle in their customer-supplier dealings with the food manufacturers. They use their purchasing power to force through their demands for quality and competitive prices. Quality assurance and flexibility of production are becoming important criteria for future-oriented food manufacturers. A combination of stringent food safety regulations and fierce competitive pressure has already led to the implementation of quality assurance systems in some sub-sectors. These systems require better qualified and highly motivated personnel.

New management strategies view qualified employees as a decisive resource, and this has increased the intra-company significance of further training.

The figures show that, on average, more money is indeed being invested in further training and education than was previously the case.

The food sector overall is characterised by fierce competition and structural change which will lead to a further reduction in the total numbers of people employed in the sector.

The employment trends vary widely from sub-sector to sub-sector and from country to country.

Although the share of the sector in the production industry overall on an EU average showed little or no change between 1980 and 1990, the total number of people employed in the food and luxury foodstuffs sector in the EU fell by more than 11 percent. The employment structure of the sector is also undergoing a process of change. There is a marked increase in the number of flexible agreements and part-time jobs. The percentage of women employed in the sector is lower than that for the production sector overall, but this percentage is increasing parallel to the increase in the number of part-time jobs. The general level of education of sector employees is lower than in other industries.

The vocational training history of the employees depends largely on their position within the company and on the structures in the sub-sector in question. It is possible to differentiate between employees with manual qualifications, factory workers with apprenticeships and management employees with academic degrees.

There is currently a trend towards an increase in the level of education and qualification requirements.

The importance attached to vocational further training varies greatly from company to company.

The way in which further training and education measures are organised in the various sub-sectors and companies depends not so much on the type of products and markets as on the type of production process and the degree of automation. Automated production calls for employees with better qualifications and is accompanied by a reduction in the number of jobs open to semiskilled and unskilled workers.

Moreover, a major part of the sector employees will be required to possess some kind of basic hygiene qualification in the future.

Wherever work organisation is restructured and quality assurance systems are introduced, we find evidence of systematic personnel development measures. These measures are accompanied by comprehensive further training and education.

In these companies, those with little qualification are also incorporated in the further training process. These further training measures mainly impart employee-based skills such as information exchange abilities.

In companies with more experience in the field of further training, there is a clear trend towards internal further training - since internal measures are less expensive, easier to organise and more efficient, and because they permit closer links between further training and communication as well as between further training and work organisation. One general complaint is that there are still insufficient criteria for the assessment and monitoring of the quality, success and acceptance of further training measures.

The quality assurance standards will probably also set new standards for the further training and education measures of the future. Total quality assurance requires that these principles be applied to all suppliers of a company and therefore also to the field of vocational training. Some companies are already demanding proof of quality assurance from internal and external providers of further training and education measures.

Further training is mainly financed by the companies, and some of this finance is channelled through state-managed fund systems. In some countries, assistance is also made available from public funds (from the member state or from the European Social Fund).

The case studies show that the long-term development of company expenditure on further training and education frequently follows a typical course: it starts at zero, then increases regularly for a certain time, before stagnating and often even decreasing. The overall trend, however, is towards increasing expenditure in this area.

Vocational further training is still mainly the responsibility of the employers. The trade unions have only limited influence and are mainly interested in three aspects:

- the connection between further training and recognition in the form of payment
- the connection between further training and job retention
- the connection between further training and working conditions

The following problem areas are defined for discussion between employers and trade unions:

- Questions regarding the probable qualification requirements in the particular context, taking into account the implications for further training requirements as well as the future quantitative development of employment. It is anticipated that changes in work organisation in sub-sectors will lead to high-level destruction of existing jobs.

- Questions regarding the probable qualification requirements and the implications for further training requirements from a qualitative point of view. The initial contours of a new "employee profile" in the food and luxury foodstuffs sector are starting to appear. Companies as well as employers and trade unions must discuss the new requirements these employees will make on the employers and trade unions as well as on intra-company working conditions.
- New requirements in the context of quality assurance techniques; quality assurance has become a central issue in the sector. It must be ascertained whether the quality assurance techniques - which were developed as management strategies - can serve as a basis for discussions between employers and trade unions on the subject of vocational further training. Opinions differ considerably on this point.

2.3 Employment, work and training in the European automobile repair and distribution sector

Methodology

The FORCE study "Employment, work and training in the European automobile repair and distribution sector" used the same methodology as the two sectoral studies outlined above. It is based both on the comparative evaluation of twelve national sectoral studies and on the evaluation of 50 selected case studies of companies in this sector in all the member states of the EU. The case studies were selected on the same basis outlined in sections 1.2.1 and 1.2.2.

Structure of the final report

The automobile sector study is divided into seven sections.

Sections 1 and 2 provide an introduction to the topic, define the terminology, and explain the methodology and the context of the study. Section 3 contains a characterisation of the automobile sector and its structures in the European context (company structures, market structures, industrial relations and employment structures). Section 4 describes the changing tasks in this sector resulting from the current process of structural change, taking account of such things as changes in automobile technology, in technical equipment levels in garages and workplaces, in legal regulations on environmental protection and safety, in company structures, and in the field of work organisation.

Sections 5 and 6 look into the current structures and developmental trends in the field of vocational further training and education in the automobile repair and distribution sector. Section 7 provides a summary of the findings.

Summary of the most important findings

In all the countries of the EU, the automobile distribution and repair sector is going through a far-reaching process of structural change which has led/is leading to new further training and education strategies on all levels.

Automobile repair garages and distribution centres are being faced with ever-increasing competitive pressure. The focal point of this competition is the effort to provide maximum quality of services in terms of customer counselling and sales as well as in the maintenance and repair of vehicles. The central goal is to increase the quality of these services in all areas.

The introduction of quality standards plays a major role with regard to the changes in the fields of work organisation, qualification requirements and qualification strategies.

Alongside the quality of the automobile itself, high quality standards in the field of services are decisive to ensure the competitiveness of the various European automobile marques.

In order to meet this challenge, the automobile repair and distribution sector is currently undergoing a process of far-reaching structural change away from the concept of car repair garages and towards the idea of highly qualified and customer-friendly service stations.

This development can be observed all over Europe, albeit to differing degrees.

Ongoing vocational further training and education plays a central role in this process of change. It not only serves to compensate for the deficits of (initial) vocational training but is also designed to help employees master the rapid pace of change in the area of technology and work organisation.

There were three main factors behind these new "quality challenges" - namely stringent safety regulations and standards, increasing competition in the area of service quality, and legal regulations on environmental protection, traffic safety and consumer protection.

The current process of technological change is primarily characterised by the trend towards the "high-tech automobile" - in other words, the trend towards automobiles with highly integrated and modular technology. This is leading to far-reaching changes in the work of automobile repair garages. The proportion of conventional mechanical repair work is decreasing, since entire components are now being replaced in the event of malfunction.

The ability to operate highly developed diagnosis systems for the purpose of fault location is becoming increasingly important. The focal points of garage operations will in future be diagnosis, adjustment services and bodywork.

In addition to requiring in-depth and updated system knowledge, these tasks also demand competence in the area of methods.

In this connection, the development and introduction of the German "service technician" - a qualification that can be attained through further training measures - is considered an innovative measure and a so-called "best practice" example, provided that this further training opportunity is open to as many employees as possible in a particular company.

Overall, two opposing developments can currently be observed in the automobile sector: firstly the standardisation and modularisation of the entire range of automobile technology on the basis of international and manufacturer-specific standards, and secondly the mutual exclusivity of manufacturers with regard to one another which systematically prevents the coordination and transfer of repair and diagnosis tools and systems (in particular the software) as well as of operating know-how.

Each automobile manufacturer trains employees in the company-specific products and diagnosis/maintenance systems. This results in major expenditure on further training and education which would otherwise be avoidable and also ties up a great deal of training capacity unnecessarily.

The automobile sector is a leader in the development and implementation of a system of continuous vocational further training employing the latest methods and media. The training measures and materials are continuously revised and updated by the manufacturers and made available to the garages and dealers.

The reason for this high-level commitment on the part of the manufacturers is their direct financial interest in qualifying the employees of these downstream companies. The quality of sales and repair services and the standard of the services provided by the dealers are important factors in the competitiveness of any automobile marque.

Most automobile manufacturers and their dealers respond to these new challenges through a strategy of future-oriented planning and continuous further training and education. The authorised service stations gain considerable advantages from the painstakingly compiled and continuously updated curricula, materials and courses provided by the manufacturers. In ideal cases, these are drawn up in a process of dialogue between the manufacturer and the authorised service stations/dealers.

On the other hand, the automobile manufacturers monitor the further training conduct of these companies and their employees extremely closely. Some manufacturers register participation in further training measures on computer and use this information to derive further training requirements for each individual employee "from the top down".

Other further training concepts, on the other hand, view the further training and education needs of the individual service stations as the decisive planning criterion or attempt to choose a "middle way" between these two models.

In order to satisfy the widespread demand for further training and education, four different groups of further training providers are active in this sector: the strictly manufacturer-oriented providers, providers from trading associations and trade unions, public-sector providers, and private-sector providers.

The clearly dominant group of manufacturer-oriented providers supplies a wide range of ongoing further training measures for the employees of the authorised garages and dealers. The measures organised by the other providers are only of a subsidiary nature, yet they are of major importance from the point of view of the employees of the independent service stations/garages, as the training measures of the manufacturer-oriented providers are only open to the employees of the authorised garages and dealers. That means that 25% - 30% of the employees is the individual member countries are excluded from these opportunities.

The contents and organisation of training concepts depend on the policy of the further training provider, the national and international market situation, the current and future qualification requirements, and the formal and informal certification systems of some of the further training providers. This results in wide variations in further training concepts from garage to garage and from country to country. The concepts which make allowance for the specific preconditions of the individual countries but which can be transferred to several EU member countries are considered the "best practice" models.

Due to the wide-ranging changes in the automobile sector, the need for vocational training has increased steadily during the last few decades. The automobile trade employs widely differing strategies in response to this ongoing process.

Most strategies are limited in one way or another, however. The further training and education courses of the independent providers can help to overcome bottlenecks in training capacity.

In the repair garages, there are two main rival models of work organisation which have a major influence on the further training options which are available. On the one hand, there is a work organisation concept and a further training concept geared towards specialised tasks performed by experts; on the other hand, there are all-round concepts aimed at enabling comprehensively qualified employees to perform a wide spectrum of qualified tasks. Although the first concept runs against the trend towards the service station model outlined above, it is still more widespread today than the second concept.

The introduction of teamwork is a major influence for change in the field of work organisation; it permits greater customer orientation and leads to new further training and education concepts.

The relationship between automobile manufacturers on the one hand and authorised garages/dealers on the other is still generally characterised by a corporate policy of the manufacturers which provides wide-ranging support but which also requires some kind of supervision of "their" garage and dealer networks. Concepts aimed at restructuring this relationship are looking for models based on mutually beneficial cooperation in which the manufacturer also learns from the garages and dealers.

There is a trend towards lean service. The characteristics of lean service concepts are:

- the introduction of sub-contractors to perform special tasks
- a form of work organisation oriented towards customer benefit (rapid service, performance of paperwork such as vehicle registration etc.)
- reduction of the internal division of labour and introduction of teamwork.

The (authorised) garages and dealers and increasingly turning into service stations which lay particular emphasis on customer service. It is difficult to predict whether the smaller companies will survive these changes or whether the trend towards ever-bigger companies will predominate.

The development of qualification requirements depends on the work organisation concept of the company. A trend can be observed towards an increasing demand for employees with wide-ranging qualifications. Teamwork, flat hierarchies and lean service all require skilled employees with broadly based qualifications. More than two qualification stages are considered counterproductive, and formalised, specialised automobile vocations appear undesirable. New forms of work organisation are becoming increasingly dominant in authorised garages/service stations.

The service stations are increasingly becoming the site of continuous vocational further training and education. In countries such as Germany and Denmark, the garages are in fact the most important centre of vocational further training and education. Reorganisation of work routines is leading to new and different further training and education concepts (specialisation models, multiple and cascade models, and models of (comprehensive) qualification for all employees). Vocational qualification measures no longer only impart technical skills but are also geared towards training the social and personal abilities which are part and parcel of high service quality.

In addition to improving the vocational skills of employees, this new service quality is also about reaching consensus on all goals and measures and linking the well-being of the individual employee with that of the company as well as (above all) motivating employees to achieve ongoing improvements in efficiency.

The cost of vocational further training and education is primarily seen as being a worthwhile investment in company personnel. Nevertheless, it is also apparent that the high pressure to engage in further training and education programmes also increases the financial burden on the companies, and the general situation is thus characterised by two opposed objectives. On the one hand, companies need to expand and improve further training and education, whilst on the other they are under great pressure to rationalise their operations. It is hoped that new strategies will help to reduce the cost of further training and education. These strategies include the decentralisation of further training and education measures and the relocation of these measures at garage level, models of integrated learning in the work process, and the development and provision of self-teaching media and material.

In modern garages and distribution companies (in particular in companies which base their work on quality assurance standards), adherence to environmental protection requirements is changing work organisation routines and is reflected in increasing qualification requirements. In the years to come, the significance of environmental protection stipulations is certain to increase in all areas of distribution and garage operations.

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Continuous Vocational Training in Europe -
Documentation on the Social Dialogue

Chapter 1.2

Comparative overview of the central findings of the five FORCE studies

1. The increasing importance of continuous vocational training

One of the central findings of all the European FORCE studies described in this report is without doubt the increasing importance of continuous vocational training in all the member states of the EU, even though there are still considerable qualitative and quantitative differences with regard to the concrete organisation of continuous vocational training in the various countries.

The overall European trend towards the increasing importance of continuous vocational training is supported by three overall tendencies:

- the quantitative increase in the number of (in particular) company-based continuous vocational training measures,
- the extension of company-based continuous vocational training courses to target broader groups of company personnel,
- the increasing importance of continuous vocational training as a bargaining instrument in negotiations between employers and trade unions on various levels and between these two parties and the state.

The fact that greater attention is being paid to continuous vocational training in the member states is also due to the special role of the EU in the field of continuous vocational training. The EU has launched a series of promotion programmes which are of importance for the development and expansion of continuous vocational training in various regions.

What are the factors behind the increased importance of continuous vocational training?

The sectoral studies point in particular to the connection between work restructuring and changes in continuous vocational training. The greater importance being attached to human resources in the endeavour to increase productivity is one of the decisive reasons for the expansion of continuous vocational training within companies.

In the retail sector, the increased orientation of consumers towards advice and quality means that sales personnel have to be and are given more intensive continuous vocational training. This also means that - as has been shown in several case studies - groups which are normally left out of the process of continuous vocational training, such as part-time employees, are now being included in this process to a greater degree. The further training programmes are basically geared towards imparting improved product know-how as well as conduct towards the customer which is in line with the corporate philosophy. Continuous vocational training is thus becoming a central element of personnel development concepts.

In the food and beverage industries, the focus is on the problems connected with product quality and in particular on implementation of the international standards ISO 9000 and following. The implementation of these standards, however, will require more extensive continuous vocational training. Alongside these increased further training needs for larger groups of employees in connection with new quality strategies, the food and beverage sector is also under pressure to become more flexible with regard to the wishes of the customers. This also results in increased continuous vocational training requirements.

The automobile repair sector study drew our attention to the increasing dependence of authorised dealers on the automobile manufacturers; a dependence which has led to specific continuous vocational training needs based on the respective manufacturer-specific technology. In addition to these increasingly closer connections between manufacturers, dealers and the repair garage sector, the competition in this industry is one of the main motors for the development of new continuous vocational training needs and strategies, for it is necessary to develop a system of customer-oriented services in order to survive in the market. This in turn requires a change in qualifications among employees. The increased significance of continuous vocational training in the automobile repair sector is therefore based on three factors: continuous vocational training in connection with technological progress, continuous vocational training in connection with changes in work structures, and continuous vocational training in connection with increased customer orientation of services.

In contrast to the three sectoral studies which looked into the processes of change in the field of continuous vocational training against the background of individual company requirements, the two studies on the contractual regulations on continuous vocational training look at the important social aspects of continuous vocational training for the modernisation of societies in a political and economic context. Both studies clearly show that there have been a high number of agreements and initiatives which regulate the contents, organisation and access criteria of continuous vocational training.

According to the Blanpain study, the fact that there is a fundamental consensus among governments, employers' associations and trade unions in the EU member states to the effect that continuous vocational training are a central element in the endeavour to modernise society and solve labour market problems can be seen as an indicator for the increased importance of continuous vocational training within the overall system of vocational training. Below this level, however, there are wide variations in the concrete approaches of country groups and of the various "social players".

In contrast to the Blanpain study, the Heidemann et al. study takes as its starting point the specific viewpoints of and preconditions for the trade unions with regard to negotiations in the social dialogue within the field of continuous vocational training. On the whole, it is fair to say that the topic of continuous vocational training has become more important for all the trade unions in Europe and has been transformed from a formerly marginal theme into a central aspect of trade union activities and strategies, although there are differences in approach in the various countries of Europe. One of the main differences between the individual trade unions is whether the increasing importance of continuous vocational training for employees causes them to gear their activities towards overall national regulations, or whether it prompts them to push for implementation of continuous vocational training entitlements of employees "only" on regional, sectoral or company level.

Although they may adopt varying approaches, all five European studies come to the conclusion that continuous vocational training has become more important for further economic and social development within the EU on all levels - from the level of society, the regions, the sectors and the companies to the level of the individual employee. The following sections will show that this trend towards increasing importance is not free of contradictions.

2. Changes in the target groups for continuous vocational training and in participation in continuous vocational training

The target groups for continuous vocational training depend on the tasks attributed to continuous vocational training measures. It is possible to distinguish between two basic approaches: continuous vocational training either serves to supply the economy with labour which has the qualifications that the economy demands. This type of continuous vocational training is primarily oriented towards company interests.

Or, on the other hand, continuous vocational training serves to promote groups which are at a particular disadvantage on the labour market. In other words, it promotes their integration in the labour market. The main special target groups are the long-term unemployed, young people, women returning to work, ethnic minorities and the like.

In recent years, continuous vocational training has gained considerably in importance within the first-named field in connection with intra-company modernisation processes. Continuous vocational training concepts motivated by this objective tend to incorporate a large section of company personnel in continuous vocational training measures.

In sub-sectors of the economy and in individual EU countries, this function of continuous vocational training is beginning to become more important than the promotion of disadvantaged groups. This is shown by, among other things, the change in criteria for the granting of state funds and assistance. Funds which were originally earmarked for the integration of disadvantaged groups in the labour market are increasingly being used for continuous vocational training measures for existing employees, not least as a result of trade union demands. Debates on this trend are currently being conducted in Belgium, Spain and Greece, or the first steps in this direction have already been made.

On the one hand, the continuous vocational training commitment of the companies and specific participation in continuous vocational training to achieve improved customer satisfaction and increased market shares have gained markedly in significance. The importance of participation in continuous vocational training geared towards individual career progress and job security has also shown a marked increase. All the sectors surveyed by the studies show clear evidence of this trend.

The FORCE sectoral studies show that intra-company continuous vocational training needs and the target groups for company-based continuous vocational training depend largely on (changing) business objectives and management strategies. Although the sectors possess differing economic and employment structures, and although the individual companies within the sectors differ in terms of size and production orientation, these structural characteristics only appear to be of secondary importance.

Management strategies and their implications for work organisation are more decisive when it comes to continuous vocational training requirements and the target groups for company-based continuous vocational training.

This becomes particularly clear if we look at the upheavals in work organisation in the wake of new management strategies such as lean concepts, quality assurance standards and corporate identity. In particular the introduction of teamwork, flatter hierarchies and quality standards generally leads to broadly based intra-company “qualification drives”.

The automobile repair sector study shows that there are currently two competing models of work organisation in the dealer and repair garage sectors. Each organisational model leads to a different target group and a different continuous vocational training concept. On the one hand, there are continuous vocational training measures which train selected employees as experts for certain tasks; in other concepts, continuous vocational training are aimed at training (almost) the entire staff. This is the case when the organisational concept of the company is based on comprehensively qualified employees performing a wide range of qualified work tasks.

The outdated concept of personnel administration is increasingly being replaced by new concepts based on personnel development. These concepts view the employee as human capital and therefore as an important - perhaps decisive - production factor.

Comprehensive planning of continuous vocational training, the systematic promotion of individual employees or entire sections of company personnel, and continuous continuous vocational training programmes become important instruments in the creation of highly skilled and motivated workforces.

Continuous vocational training then no longer focuses only on the upper and middle management level of the companies or on the qualification of experts, but incorporates a higher number of employees as well as totally new target groups.

Although, in most companies, the more highly qualified male employees still profit more from continuous vocational training than the less well-qualified employees and employees who belong to one of the disadvantaged groups on the labour market, there are indications that sections of the company workforce who were previously excluded are increasingly being integrated in continuous vocational training planning.

The first "best practice" models are in operation in the retail sector; these models provide continuous vocational training for part-time employees or systematically promote this group. Up to the present, participation levels have been low - particularly in the area of advancement training - although these employees account for almost 50% of all employees in this sector in some countries. Participation rates of and opportunities for part-time employees basically depend on how this group is integrated in the personnel policy concept of the company in question - as a fringe group or as a group of flexible employees who nevertheless belong to the permanent company structure.

Store assistants and cashier personnel are increasingly being incorporated in systematic personnel development measures through the provision of continuous vocational training in the retail sector.

In the food industry, companies who build up quality assurance systems also train less well-qualified employees in the basic principles of food quality and hygiene.

There are, however, groups of people who have profited little (if at all) from continuous vocational training, such as the mostly unqualified warehouse workers.

Moreover, lean concepts lead to a situation in which parts of production or services are passed down to sub-contractors. This is causing a trend towards smaller permanent workforces. It is still unclear whether, and to what extent, these mostly small sub-contractors organise continuous vocational training measures.

In other words, continuous vocational training as a "modernisation instrument" has certain risks, for continuous vocational training measures motivated by this goal are particularly geared towards groups of employees who the company believes can make an important contribution towards dynamic business growth - in other words towards employees who are already well-qualified and generally also fairly young.

There is a risk that the losers in these modernisation processes will be those groups of employees

- who are not as achievement-oriented due to their age, their low initial qualifications or for other reasons and who cannot make a decisive contribution towards modernisation (intra-company level),
- or who belong to the so-called problem groups on the labour market (extra-company level).

These groups suffer most of all when the financial funding for continuous vocational training is taken away from them and redistributed among the qualified core groups among the employees.

3. Access to continuous vocational training - an unsolved problem

In all the countries of the EU, there are agreements between employers and unions, and in some cases between these two and the state, which regulate the continuous vocational training opportunities and the continuous vocational training entitlements of employees.

The only way to achieve trans-sectoral access regulations, however, is through national legislation. The differing regional regulations also complicate the creation of uniform and transparent access regulations.

It is generally possible to differentiate between access regulations backed up by state legislation and those laid down in collective agreements (at national level, sectoral level or company level). The range and contents of the provisions contained in legal regulations and collective agreements differ considerably in the various member states and sectors.

At present, legal regulations govern such access in France, Italy and Denmark, as well as in parts of Belgium and Germany. A continuous vocational training law is currently being drafted in Luxembourg.

The basic standpoints of the bargaining parties with regard to the regulation of continuous vocational training can be outlined as follows.

The employers in all member states view vocational training as part of the power and decision-making complex of management. In their opinion, decisions on measures, target groups and access to vocational further training are to be classified as elements of strategic personnel development and therefore as company decisions. It is indeed the case that, in most companies, the superiors are responsible for deciding on company-level continuous vocational training measures for the employees and on the admission of interested employees to these measures. This is particularly the case in the area of advancement training. The case studies in the retail sector show that participation in advancement training is generally only possible if proposed by the employee's superiors.

There are, however, several signs that the provisions for intra-company access to training measures are changing. An increasing number of training and education measures are now open to all employees within a company.

The majority of European employers categorically reject the notion of an individual right to continuous vocational training, particularly in the guise of training leave.

The European trade unions, on the other hand, do not view continuous vocational training as a freely tradable product. They unanimously demand the collective safeguarding of an individual right to continuous vocational training. This type of individual right currently exists in the form of training leave in several countries (e.g. Belgium, France, Danmark and in some of the German laender).

The trade unions demand more influence on all levels and in all areas in which continuous vocational training is regulated. On company level, these demands are mainly geared towards the right to codetermination in the definition of continuous vocational training needs, target groups, and access provisions - in addition to questions of concept, implementation and funding of measures.

One positive example in connection with access entitlement to continuous vocational training measures is the French ruling which has been in effect since 1982. In France, an originally collective agreement-based provision, which was later incorporated in the country's labour legislation, guarantees the individual right of employees to continuous vocational training. There is an individual right to training leave ("Congé de Formation Individuel"). The decision on funding of successful applications for continuous vocational training is made by an equal-representation fund committee. Preference is given to applications from unskilled employees who want to acquire a qualified diploma. The average duration of individual training leave is in the order of 800 hours.

Even where far-reaching access regulations have been created on the basis of sectoral collective agreements in sub-sectors of the economy, there is still the problem of inequality of access for employees from the various sectors. This inequality is aggravated by the large freedom of decision on the part of the companies. This leads to variations in intra-company implementation of access opportunities and access conditions.

The sectoral studies revealed the following problem areas:

- In the automobile dealership and repair sector, one of the main problems is that some of the providers of continuous vocational training stage special measures for specific groups of employees whilst systematically excluding other employees in this sector from these measures. Continuous vocational training measures offered by providers who cooperate closely with the automobile manufacturers (e.g. customer service training centres of the automobile manufacturers or importers as well as consultants of the manufacturers) are only open to the employees of the authorised dealers and repair garages. This provision strategy is problematical, as the further training measures in question are of extreme importance within the sector, both in quantitative and qualitative terms. Exclusion from continuous vocational training is used as a competitive instrument by the automobile manufacturers. In view of these problems, it is clear just how important it is to have a varied provider structure. In the automobile repair sector, other manufacturer-independent providers of continuous vocational training ensure a minimum level of continuous vocational training courses for the employees of the brand-dependent dealerships and car repair garages.
- One of the basic problems is that there are often priority conflicts between the necessity for continuous vocational training on the one side and short-term economic goals on the other. The case studies in the retail sector study show that these problems are particularly common in companies and company groups in which there is decentralised responsibility for continuous vocational training and in which the decision on admission to continuous vocational training measures is therefore made at company level or departmental level. In many cases, the implementation of continuous vocational training measures which the company management deems necessary for the realisation of its future objectives is nipped in the bud. The pressure to achieve short-term sales targets leads to explicit or implicit rejection of continuous vocational training programmes - both among management and among employees at company level. Managing directors and other managing executives are sceptical about the release of employees interested in continuous vocational training if their participation in such measures means that the remaining employees will be faced with a markedly higher workload or if the quality of services will suffer.
- Finally, in view of the growing percentage of co-investment models for the funding of continuous vocational training measures, we must ask ourselves

whether these funding models make it more difficult for certain employee groups to participate in continuous vocational training (or even prevent their participation). Co-investment models require that the employees who take part in continuous vocational training make a contribution towards the funding of such measures - either in the form of a financial levy or through the sacrifice of leisure time.

The following areas are seen to be particularly important areas of action for the trade unions within the context of access provisions in the field of continuous vocational training:

(1) the implementation of trans-sectoral, uniform regulations backed up by legislation or collective agreements which secure an individual legal entitlement to continuous vocational training and which also create access conditions which really do enable all employees to take part in the relevant measures.

(2) the extension of codetermination options in the area of need definition, in the selection of target groups, and in the admission of employees to continuous vocational training measures at company level.

4. Individual versus company interests in continuous vocational training

All the European FORCE studies confirm the marked increase in the importance of vocational continuous vocational training. Although this increased significance is found in nearly all economic sectors and in all member states, the individual employees and employers associate different interests with the question of vocational continuous vocational training measures.

This opens up one of the central fields of conflict between employers and trade unions in connection with questions of vocational continuous vocational training. This fundamental conflict of interests between employers and employees can only partly be resolved on the basis of compromise.

It is possible to distinguish between different functional areas of continuous vocational training which are accorded differing levels of importance in the various European countries. From the point of view of the individual, it is possible to differentiate between advancement training, adaptation training, retraining and training/education measures geared towards integration in the labour market. From the point of view of society, we can divide continuous vocational training measures into instruments of labour market policy connected with intra-company modernisation measures on the one hand and continuous vocational training measures based on personal choice on the other.

These various functions also reflect the differing interests of employers and employees in the pursuit of continuous vocational training and show that these commitments can be seen in totally different economic and political contexts.

The employers view the conceptual organisation of company-based continuous vocational training measures as their prerogative. The decisions to be made in this area are seen together with personnel development strategies as an important instrument of company management.

The conceptual organisation of company-based continuous vocational training and decisions on access and target groups are therefore subordinated to corporate goals and are primarily geared towards adapting employees to intra-company modernisation processes; they are often used as an instrument to maintain a company's competitiveness vis-à-vis the competition.

As intra-company continuous vocational training is seen as an investment in human capital, the target groups are systematically selected and the contents exactly tailored to the needs of the company. Further training measures are increasingly being staged within companies and are closely related to daily work routines. Accordingly, investment in continuous vocational training measures must pay dividends - in other words there must be visible benefits for the company's operations.

The central aspect of the employers' standpoint is the idea that vocational further training is an investment both for the company and for the individual employee. The main interest of the company is therefore in the attainment of "narrow" (workplace-specific) company-specific skills. (Blanpain study).

Although new management strategies emphasise the importance of the individual employee as a production factor, the economic interests of the company are still the focal point of training investment.

In line with modern corporate identity concepts, a strategy is pursued which attempts to bring the interests of employers and employees closer together.

In the automobile repair sector study, it was ascertained that "following this philosophy means developing group consensus with regard to overall aims and measures and requires a link between the prosperity of employees and that of their employers."

Continuous vocational training is one of the means used to establish a corporate identity within the company.

The interests of the employees in continuous vocational training are characterised by their fundamentally weaker position on the labour market. In particular in times of rapid modernisation and rationalisation, employees are forced to maintain the value of their labour by taking part in continuous vocational training measures. Part of this adaptation process is based on didactically prepared training courses, whilst the major part is based on daily work routines (learning by doing).

Alongside this type of adaptation training, which is often the result of outside pressure, advancement training provides the individual employee with the opportunity to improve his or her occupational standing. Although access to intra-company advancement training measures is mostly controlled by management (and therefore limited), individual employees are often highly interested in participation in such measures. Successful participation in such measures is linked to concrete expectations with regard to improvements in the individual's career position.

Under the pressure of fierce competition between employees, particularly in the event of threatening or actual unemployment, vocational retraining measures and measures geared towards the attainment of vocational qualifications that are in demand can also be in the interests of the individual employee.

However, the individual must not only attempt to ensure that his or her qualifications are beneficial within a company context but is forced to maintain his or her flexibility and mobility in order to ward off the threat of unemployment or to enhance his or her position on the labour market. It is in the interests of the employees to attain qualifications which are useful both within and outside the company they work in. These qualifications mainly include qualifications which are not excessively tailored to specific intra-company application contexts. The uniform or at least generally recognised certification of (successful) participation in continuous vocational training measures is one of the basic preconditions for the mobility of employees within the labour market.

Continuous vocational training measures which are not of direct occupational benefit (this applies to some of the German training leave courses) are heavily criticised by the employers and find markedly lower acceptance levels among the employees themselves. The sectoral studies did not look into the question of whether this is due to inhibitions with regard to participation or hether the employees are not interested in continuous vocational training courses which are not narrowly job-specific.

The increasing importance of continuous vocational training and the move away from intra-company personnel *administration* and towards personnel *development* give cause for hope that individual and company interests in the field of continuous vocational training can be reconciled with one another. In other words, we might well see some kind of "rapprochement" between the interests of employers and those of employees.

The FORCE studies show that there are new joint fields of action for employers and trade unions in the field of continuous vocational training. In this field in particular, there are many signs that the outdated and often rigid structures in the area of industrial relations are being modernised - both in the dealings between employer organisations and in those between competing unions.

Wherever trade unions are involved in the organisation of vocational further training, they can help to create exemplary problem-solving concepts which serve to enhance everyday work routines and which open up new vocational options for employees.

The wide variety of organisational models ascertained in the case studies of the sectoral studies show, however, that there are contradictory trends in the organisation of company-based continuous vocational training.

The increasing number of courses for vocational basic qualification - such as the basic qualifications in hygiene in the food industry - and the increasing intra-company importance of social skills reflected in the continuous vocational training courses offered to employees give the impression that company interests on the one hand and employee interests on the other are gradually being reconciled.

On the other hand, several examples from the automobile repair sector show the potential pressure on individuals in the field of adaptation training, the volume of capital resources and individual effort wasted on "perishable" qualifications, and the way in which the exclusion from continuous vocational training courses is used as a strategic instrument in the competitive battle between automobile manufacturers and between their authorised repair garages/dealers.

This clearly shows that the current increase in importance of continuous vocational training does not in itself ensure that the individual interests of employees are satisfied. The FORCE study "Collective agreements on continuous vocational training - counselling and information among the European trade unions", for example, explicitly emphasises the safeguarding of individual interests (alongside company interests) in continuous vocational training as an important field of action for the European trade unions.

5. Continuous vocational training - opportunity or obligation?

The portrayal of the conflict between individual and company interests in continuous vocational training clearly shows that participation in continuous vocational training measures can be experienced as an opportunity as well as an obligation. One of the factors this depends on is the individual motivation as well as the integration of continuous vocational training measures in intra-company restructuring processes.

The question as to opportunity or obligation leads us on to two central problem areas: firstly, attention is drawn to the individual level of experience of continuous vocational training; in other words, the focus is on how the individual employees experience the vocational further training requirements and opportunities.

Secondly, it shows that it is still not clear to what extent participation in continuous vocational training measures can be seen as an opportunity or whether it will in future become compulsory. Therefore, there is certainly the risk that ongoing participation in adaptation training measures will become essential in order to avoid the threat of unemployment.

The legal position of the individual employee with regard to company-based continuous vocational training requirements is still mainly unclear. The organisation of company-based continuous vocational training opportunities and requirements is currently still an open and therefore "shapable" process, both from an individual and a collective point of view.

Even in the absence of secured findings on the acceptance of company-based continuous vocational training, it is fair to claim that participation in continuous vocational training is by no means a matter of course.

In all forms of continuous vocational training, there is always the question as to the benefit for the employees. Training and education always mean effort on the part of the individual employee. This raises the subjective question of whether this effort has any tangible benefits at all for the individual. To this extent, the problem of the recognition of continuous vocational training in the form of wage increases, promotion and certification must always be seen in connection with the implementation of broader continuous vocational training entitlements by the unions. (Heidemann et al.)

Alongside these basic preconditions, which have to be fulfilled to ensure that continuous vocational training can be perceived as an opportunity for the individual, there are further barriers to participation in continuous vocational training measures.

The main problem areas appear to be the following:

- the "education gap" among those groups of employees unaccustomed to education,
- fears fuelled by intra-company change which can act as learning barriers,
- insufficient financial options on the part of employees in the case of co-investment models; in other words, problems when participants in continuous vocational training measures are forced to make a financial contribution,

- where courses are not directly linked to company interests, employees often fear that employers will be reluctant to accept participation in continuous vocational training courses.

Participation in continuous vocational training measures is perceived as an obligation if it is based on outside pressure - in other words, if it is not underpinned by personal motivation, appears irrelevant to everyday work routines within the company and therefore pointless, and/or if the efforts made during participation in continuous vocational training measures are not rewarded financially or in some other form.

Even though the Europe-wide FORCE studies do not allow any empirically secured statements on the increase in continuous vocational training requirements, it is nevertheless clear that these requirements have increased and that it is difficult for the individual to bypass these requirements.

The case studies in the retail sector showed that, in half of the companies in which participation in continuous vocational training measures is voluntary, the courses in question are only open to selected individuals.

In 35% of the surveyed companies, however, participation in continuous vocational training courses is compulsory.

In particular, companies which pursue a quality strategy and which hope to develop new concepts or penetrate new market segments make participation in continuous vocational training courses compulsory for sales personnel (retail sector study).

Even without a legally or collectively stipulated obligation to participate in continuous vocational training, participation is increasingly becoming a de facto obligation for the majority of employees. The retail sectoral study ascertained that this unwritten obligation already exists.

Similar trends can be ascertained in the automobile repair sector. In the wake of the increased importance of service quality and the introduction of lean management, many companies have begun to implement continuous vocational training concepts geared towards the comprehensive qualification of a large part of their personnel.

In order to avoid the negative effects on the motivation of employees resulting from the obligation to participate in continuous vocational training, retail companies have begun to allocate individual responsibility to employees within the framework of the continuous vocational training process - but not without formulating the interests and requirements of the company at the same time.

The FORCE studies bring to light a whole range of examples of regulations for the implementation of compulsory continuous vocational training in individual companies.

One common strategy involves career discrimination for employees who do not participate in such measures. The continuous willingness to participate in continuous vocational training measures is more or less a precondition for certain career positions.

The automobile repair sector study provided numerous examples of the way in which automobile manufacturers monitor participation of the employees of their authorised repair garages and dealerships in continuous vocational training measures. The participation of each individual employee is registered on computer, and the computer data are used to derive continuous vocational training requirements for each individual employee.

Examples from the same sector show how the decentralisation and "individualisation" of continuous vocational training measures - motivated by the endeavour to economise in the field of training and education - lead to the spread of self-learning (autodidactic) training methods. This creates a totally unacceptable pressure on employees to participate in continuous vocational training. In the words of the sectoral study: "Where manufacturers and repair garages agree on the introduction of autodidactic materials for spare time studies, this may result in an inordinately high further training pressure on employees."

In connection with the organisation of continuous vocational training in the field of conflict between individual opportunity and further training obligation, there are important fields of action for the trade unions:

(1) with regard to the creation of problem-solving concepts geared towards the elimination of barriers to continuous vocational training and thus towards promoting the perception of the extended opportunities for continuous vocational training on the part of employees;

(2) with the aim of securing the individual benefits of continuous vocational training efforts in collective agreements (gratification of participation in continuous vocational training measures, job security, promotion etc.);

(3) in connection with the implementation of uniform or at least generally recognised certification of company-based and external continuous vocational training;

(4) generally geared towards promoting the individual opportunities and interests connected with participation in continuous vocational training measures vis-à-vis company interests in continuous vocational training.

6. Continuous vocational training as a system?

The comparative portrayal of the findings from the five Europe-wide studies conducted within the framework of the FORCE programme shows the uniform trend towards an increase in continuous vocational training and also sheds light on individual aspects connected with the standpoints of the employees which certainly appear partly contradictory. In view of the increased importance of continuous vocational training, the question remains as to whether the field of continuous vocational training will establish itself as a new tertiary education system alongside the general education and vocational training systems in Europe, or whether the new requirements regarding the qualification of employees at company or sector level can be satisfied by organising continuous vocational training measures and will therefore remain separate and selective.

The sectoral studies seem to indicate that the companies define their continuous vocational training needs in their own particular manner and that they satisfy these needs selectively in line with this company-specific definition of needs. In an overall societal context, this means that education in this sector is being privatised, and this will tend to cement the existing inequalities within society.

Nevertheless, the findings of the sectoral studies also point to trends which could well counteract this "separatism" under certain circumstances. If the endeavour to improve quality and to restructure work routines means that the individual employee has to be given greater responsibility, and if this process necessitates continuous vocational training, then company-specific training will have to give way - at least to some extent - to more general educational contents. To this extent, the personnel development concepts developed in connection with changing management strategies (lean management) provide stimuli for releasing continuous vocational training measures from the tight bond of specific intra-company requirements. For certain workforces, in other words, this could mean that company-specific continuous vocational training becomes more general and can therefore be transferred to other areas and applications.

Although such a trend would help to overcome the trend towards company-specific "separatism" in the field of continuous vocational training, it would still not be possible to speak of continuous vocational training as a system, since it is not possible to make it more general in a societal context via the company-specific or even sector-specific level.

The most promising trends towards the development of continuous vocational training into a "system" can be found in the studies which describe various forms of agreements between employers and trade unions or between these two parties and the state.

Although there is a general trend in Europe overall towards increasing numbers of agreements in the field of continuous vocational training, very few of these agreements are effective at national level. As a result, the trend towards the creation of a new tertiary education sector of continuous vocational training can only be observed in individual countries. The case studies documented in the Blanpain and Heidemann et al. studies show that this trend is stronger in countries which do not possess a regulated system of initial vocational training than in countries where initial training is already well established.

In spite of the increased activity in the field of continuous vocational training, considerable problems remain, and these problems can only be solved on the basis of new and far-reaching agreements between employers and trade unions which are underpinned by state legislation. This also applies to the development of a system for the funding of continuous vocational training. The new Spanish model and the French fund system are examples of European approaches which show how it might be possible to promote the development of continuous vocational training into a system which is in line with the principle of equality in society.

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Continuous Vocational Training in Europe - Documentation on the Social Dialogue

Chapter 2

Examples for fields of action and levels of action for trade union further training and education policy

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Introduction

Introduction

The following sections describe seven examples of problem-solving concepts in the area of further training and education. One of the common features of all the examples is that they were developed or are being implemented within the framework of the social dialogue. The trade unions and/or company-based representatives of employee interests are therefore involved in all the following examples.

The selected examples are based on four *fields of action* and three *levels of action;* this takes account of the fact that the trade union policy in the various states has to be geared towards conceptual problem areas of further training and education as well as implemented on the various levels. The following *fields of action* were identified as being the most urgent:

- further training and education between modernisation and social protection,
- possibilities and limits of further training and education in the modernisation process,
- company and individual interests in further training and education,
- problems with the implementation of agreements.

The following *levels of action* were included in the study:

- further training and education on company level,
- further training and education on sector level,
- further training and education as a system.

An important level of action for the trade unions - the regional level - has not yet been included.

Trade union policy must be systematically geared towards all levels of action and help to develop a "systematic model" for a comprehensive further training and education strategy. The examples in this information product have their own specific place in such a model. The presentation of the examples is based on a concept which is designed to enable readers to address the question as to whether the experiences made in other countries might be of use for their own strategies in the field of further training and education. Portrayal of the various problem-solving approaches (which also looks at the conditions for the creation of these approaches), is followed by relatively exact description of the instrumental or operative level, and this is followed by an assessment from the point of view of the country in question. Finally, we try to assess the degree to which specific experiences can be used for a "transfer discussion" between the trade unions in the member states of the EU.

Using the report on the preceding project ("Social dialogue and further training and education in Europe - new challenges for the trade unions"), we present examples for **four fields of action:**

Further training and education between modernisation and social protection:

The job switch model in Denmark

The Danish model serves as an example for one of the central fields of action of the trade unions - namely, to mediate in their further training and education policy between the interests of modernisation for intra-company work routines on the one hand and the need for social protection against the negative effects of modernisation processes on the other and/or to take account of these two interests of their members. The ever-increasing importance of further training and education within the framework of intra-company modernisation processes goes hand in hand with the risk that this training will mainly be aimed at the groups of employees who can make a major contribution to this process - in other words, training measures will tend to be aimed at those who are already well qualified. The losers in this type of further training and education are then predominantly those who are "on the fringes" of the company staff as well as the unemployed. The Danish job switch model seems to point to one way in which the various interests in further training and education can be integrated, since it links lengthy periods of further training and education for company employees with periods of employment for persons who would otherwise be unemployed.

Possibilities and limits of further training and education in the modernisation process:

The "Equal Opportunities Programme" of the Electricity Supply Board (ESB) in Ireland

The Irish example of a company-based promotion programme for the equality of women at the workplace is used to show that further training and education is only one element in an overall process - in other words, that the expansion of further training and education alone will not suffice to solve the problem of the inequality of opportunity for men and women in the working sphere. It therefore shows that there are certain limits to further training and education and that changes in an individual's occupational situation cannot be achieved on the basis of that individual's efforts in the area of further training and education alone. The Irish model links further training and education measures with the implementation of national laws on non-discriminatory remuneration and equality in the field of employment. Moreover, new organisational structures have to be created for implementation in order to ensure that it is possible to monitor and evaluate the effects of the "equality strategy". This example shows clearly that further training and education can only be seen as one element in a far broader overall restructuring strategy.

Company and individual interests in further training and education:

The British National Vocational Qualification system (NVQ)

The British NVQ system was chosen as a problem-solving approach as it, to a certain extent, shows ways in which the tension between company and individual interests in further training and education can be productively combined. The modular structure of the NVQ system and the non-formal training routes for the certification of qualifications ensure that the acquisition of the certificate takes account of the needs and interests of the company's situation. In addition, the companies also pursue a further training and education policy which is coordinated in terms of the breadth and depth of the required qualifications with the company's special needs. From the point of view of the individual employee, the creation of the NVQ system also means that he (or she) is able to build up an individual "qualification biography" in line with his or her own interests in both a horizontal (different skills) and a vertical direction (different requirement levels) and with regard to both the level of the qualification and the scheduling of the training phases. The introduction of the NVQ system also goes a long way towards overcoming the conventional divide between the system of basic vocational training and the field of further training and education.

Problems with the implementation of agreements:

Financing regulations for further training and education in France

The example of funding regulations in France is used to show how general regulations adopted on national level are implemented in the "operative" institutions at the various levels. For the way in which these regulations are implemented largely determines whether an agreement has any real positive effects from the point of view of the employees - and it is therefore an important field of action for the trade unions. France has one of the most highly developed systems of agreements between employers and trade unions in the field of further training and education. This example is therefore used to show the problems which occur during implementation and the problem-solving concepts developed by the trade unions.

The four examples from the four fields of action will then be supplemented by *three levels of action* for the trade unions in the field of further training and education:

Action on company level:

Company agreements in Germany

For the trade unions and/or the elected intra-company representatives of employee interests, the company is an important level of action in the field of further training and education, as it is here that the interests of the employees can be directly addressed. This is especially the case with further training and education, as it is at company level that there has been an enormous increase in further training and education within the EU. Due to the special provisions in the German Industrial Constitutional Act, the employee councils have a considerable say in questions of vocational training (including initial vocational training and further training and education). Although the trade unions are not directly involved on company level, their influence on the employee councils ensures that they are involved in the organisation of intra-company working routines. The German example can therefore be used to explore the opportunities and problems for the trade unions on the company level of action.

The sector as a level of action:

The collective agreement in the printing industry in the Netherlands

The policy of the Dutch trade unions in the area of collective agreements on working and training conditions has always been heavily geared towards the sectoral level. The example of the MTV 1994 also follows this tradition. The new aspect of this approach is the forging of a link between the sectoral level and the company level of action with the aim of supporting implementation of the collective agreement. As this approach stays with the "sectoral tradition" whilst linking it to the need for action on company level, the Dutch example constitutes an attempt to improve the working and training conditions in a sector in a material way, and not only formally, in the interests of the sector employees.

Further training and education as a system:

The example of the agreement on further training and education in Spain

Whilst the other examples outline partial approaches to a trade union strategy in the field of further training and education, the Spanish example is used to show how regulations on further training and education can be implemented on system level as well as the consequences of this strategy. Taking the national level as its starting point, the Spanish agreement on further training and education (which has been in force since 1992) has developed instruments and organisational structures for the implementation of the agreement on sectoral and company level. This further training and education system also incorporates a funding system financed by contributions from both employers and employees. The Spanish example is therefore of particular interest within the context of the debate on further training and education in the social dialogue, as the agreement on national level makes provision for implementation on all levels down to the company level.

The following examples of new approaches can provide stimuli for the incorporation of ideas from other countries in the strategy of the trade unions within the context of the social dialogue.

Continuous Vocational Training in Europe - Documentation on the Social Dialogue

Chapter 2

Examples for fields of action and levels of action for trade union further training and education policy

2.1

Field of action: further training between modernisation and social protection

Example: The job-switch model in Denmark

The job-switch model in Denmark

Vocational further training and education is becoming increasingly important for employees from two points of view: within the framework of intra-company modernisation processes geared towards securing the future development and competitiveness of the company, it provides employees with an opportunity to participate in this modernisation from a vocational point of view; moreover, further training and education also serves to provide some form of social protection from the negative effects of this modernisation. This social protection function applies both to employees who are in danger of becoming losers in the modernisation process due to inadequate qualification and to the unemployed who want to be integrated in the employment system. In line with these two functions, there are two clearly defined areas of further training and education in most countries in Europe: further training and education geared towards intra-company modernisation, and further training and education geared towards the integration of the unemployed. Attempts have been made in the recent past, however, to find an integrated solution to the problem of the conflicting aims of modernisation and social protection. One such attempt is the job-switch model in Denmark which was developed by the trade unions and the employers on national level and which is now being implemented within Danish companies.

1. What are the main features of this approach?

The job-switch model combines the further training and education of existing employees with the limited employment and further training of unemployed persons:

- Unemployed persons are trained to
- fill the workplaces of
- employees who are undergoing further training and education.

In practice, there are two basic sub-models:

- The collective model: during intra-company further training and education courses (within the framework of the intra-company training programme, for example), unemployed persons fill the workplaces of participants in further training and are prepared for this work in courses.

  The individual model: employees in Denmark can make use of various options for longer-term leave - there is a legal right to family leave, and there is the option of training leave and sabbaticals based on voluntary agreements between employer and employee. During the leave period, the workplace of the employee in question is filled by (mainly pre-trained) unemployed persons.

In both cases, financial assistance is available from the state labour market fund for the further training and education of these two groups (employees and unemployed persons).

2. What problems does the approach address?

The job-switch model addresses four different interests and needs:

- the need of employees to obtain leave from their work for a certain period - up to one year - in order to undergo further training, take parental leave, or take a general sabbatical;
- the interest of employees in participating in intra-company modernisation processes - on either a voluntary or a compulsory basis;
- the interest of companies in training their employees and in filling their workplaces during training courses (and other types of absence);
- the interest of unemployed persons in becoming reintegrated in the employment system.

3. How was this approach developed?

The job-switch model must be seen within the context of state legislation on various leave regulations as well as in connection with active labour market policy on the one hand and a 1991 collective agreement between trade unions and employers on national level on the other.

The state legislation regulates the conditions for the funding of further training and education and employment as well as the prerequisites for the granting of leave to employees. In the collective agreement, the employers and the trade unions created new options for decentralised company-based negotiations on intra-company training programmes. Practical experience shows that the greatest use is made of the legal provisions.

Denmark is number one in Europe when it comes to taking advantage of longer-term work leave. The companies have to adapt their production operations and the provision of services to the increased desire for temporary work leave. There is also an increasing need for company-based further training and education geared towards securing future competitiveness. On the other hand, unemployment is also high in Denmark despite the country's active labour market policy. As in other European countries, the prospects of reintegration in the labour market decrease with increasing duration of unemployment.

These factors prompted the Danish trade union federation - the LO - and the Danish employers' federation - the DA - to look for solutions which ensured some degree of social protection for the unemployed whilst catering to the specific modernisation interests of companies and employees. The employer and employee federations then looked at the options for negotiating agreements which systematically combine the various legal regulations on company level.

4. Who is involved?

The parties initially involved in the creation of the model were the trade union federation and the employers' federation on national level. By its very nature, however, the model has to be implemented at company level. It is therefore the responsibility of the company management and the intra-company trade union representatives.

In a growing number of companies, the job-switch model is meanwhile practiced on the basis of formal agreements or informal consensus. The following example will serve to illustrate this practice:

At the Rockwool company - which processes mineral wool for insulation materials - the job-switch model is practiced in connection with the intra-company training programme. In line with the intention of the model, company organisational development and the satisfaction of the individual social needs of unemployed persons have been integrated.

The starting point for the extension of further training and education within the context of intra-company training planning was the necessity to improve product quality and to achieve progress in the area of intra-company organisation. The latter aim involves the decentralisation of team-based responsibility and a change in the duties and roles of employees and superiors accompanied by an overall improvement in qualification levels. Whereas a working team used to be made up of 15 employees of whom five were qualified, the teams now consist of 10 employees of whom nine are qualified. Unskilled workers, in particular, need to be prepared for these changes. "Employee-activated production development" is the key phrase in this intra-company development project.

The intra-company training plans provide for annual participation quotas in further training and education; however, the company has not been fully able to meet the ambitious targets:

Blue-collar - 8 days per year (actual level 5.5)

White-collar - 3.5 days per year (actual level 2)

Superiors/Leaders - 5 days per year (actual level 4)

The shop steward committee within the company suggested the organisation of "soft qualification courses" for unskilled employees. The personnel department took up this proposal, but talks in terms of "hard skills", as it believes them to be necessary for the new intra-company demands. These courses are designed to improve self-confidence levels among production employees: reading, writing, speaking, communication, computers. This is evidence of the increasing importance of general education as a key qualification for vocational further training and education.

Most of the training courses take place outside the company in the AMU centres for vocational training and in the VUC centres for general education. From 1995 onwards, the company hopes to stage further training and education courses in cooperation with the network of evening schools, where employees are initially to be trained as "professional job trainers" who can instruct new employees at the workplace.

During the periods in which employees are absent undergoing further training, the company arranges for the same "volume" of unemployed persons to take their places. In the various plants of the company, which employs a total 800 people, the total volume of training/education measures in 1994 was 54 man-months. To replace the employees undergoing further training, six unemployed persons were employed for nine months. The latter were prepared for their new duties in 12-week courses comprising 9 weeks vocational training in AMU centres and 3 weeks placement experience in the plant in question.

In this company, the job-switch model is practiced on the basis of a formal local agreement between the management and the shop steward committee. The latter is made up of 5 members from the union of unskilled workers (SID) and one representative each from the metalworkers' and electricians' unions. The negotiations were led by the CO-Industri trade union cartel, which was founded one year ago by the Danish trade unions within the framework of an organisational reform. This local agreement resulted in the creation of an intra-company board for vocational training which draws up the detailed plans for training and the concept for the job-switch model.

Alongside the job-switch model, the intra-company training plans also make provision for the replacement of individuals on longer-term leave by external employees.

5. What resources and instruments are available?

The various funds for state labour market policy provide financial assistance for the funding of training measures and the recruitment of unemployed persons within the context of the job-switch model. These funds are fed from levies on both employees and employers. Since 1994, employees have paid 5% of gross earnings into these funds (this figure is to rise to 8% from 1997), whilst the employers have paid an additional contribution of 0.3% (to be increased to 0.6% from 1998). These monies are used to finance both the passive labour market policy measures - unemployment benefit - as well as the measures implemented within the framework of the country's active labour market policy.

Alongside the fund for unemployment benefit, the following two fund are also used to finance the job-switch model:

- the "activation fund", which is used to promote general education and vocational training measures;
- the fund for employment measures for the unemployed (ATB)

Money from the activation fund for training and education measures is only available if an individual plan of action has been drawn up for the employee in question. It is expressly stipulated that the training/education measures should not be narrowly job-oriented but should also be geared towards broadening general education; this is an indication of the increasing importance of general education measures (key qualifications) compared to specialist vocational training contents.

In the example described above at the Rockwool company, qualification of employees is financed from the fund for labour market policy; as, however, the fund does not compensate training participants for their full wage/salary, the company tops up the payments from its own resources.

6. What is the current assessment of this approach?

The job-switch model is being used in a growing number of companies. In the example described above, unskilled employees appear to be highly motivated to participate in further training and education measures. The reason behind this enthusiasm seems to be the fear that non-participants in further training and education measures will lose out in the intra-company modernisation process and that their jobs might be subsequently filled by unemployed persons. Experience at Rockwool has shown that around half of those taken on on limited contracts in the job-switch model have subsequently stayed with the company. The others have returned to the labour market but might well have been able to make use of their new occupational experience (although there are no reliable data on the further fortunes of this group).

It appears that the job-switch model can also help small and medium-sized companies to establish systematic intra-company training and education programmes, as the frequent barrier to further training and education in these companies - the replacement of employees undergoing training for the duration of their absence - is overcome by the model.

Experience with the job-switch model to date, however, is confined to sectors where employees have low qualification levels, as these are jobs which unemployed persons can viably fill for a certain period of time. A further problem is that the only centres which prepare unemployed persons for their new duties are the AMU centres, which only provide courses for those with low qualification levels. The inclusion of more advanced courses or the relocation of courses in the new VUC centres for general education could well help to promote the upward extension of the model to incorporate higher qualification levels. This would, however, depend on the willingness of the companies to open up these areas for operation of the model. The trade union organisation for academics has recently been making efforts to implement the model at higher levels. Moreover, the trade unions are thinking about the introduction of a "rotation system" of further training and education which provides for the replacement of higher qualified employees during training leave by less-well qualified employees from the same company. These less-well qualified employees could then be replaced by unemployed persons. As yet, however, no practical experience has been gathered in this area.

7. What ist the status of this approach within the context of trade union further training and education policy?

The job-switch model integrates the fields of action of intra-company qualification, labour market policy and social welfare. The Danish trade unions see the model as an attempt to resolve the conflict between modernisation and social protection and between individual interests and company interests. One of the most important questions, however, is how to prevent the creation of a new fringe group of "switchers" on the labour market who are constantly on the go from one limited contract to another without the option of obtaining a permanent job. For it should not be forgotten that the job-switch model itself does not create any additional jobs.

8. What stimuli does the approach provide for a transfer of experience?

The individual regulations on labour market policy, training and other leave, and intra-company further training and education which are integrated in the job-switch model are also found in other European countries. This would suggest that transferral might be possible within the respective institutional context. This would help to achieve several important goals simultaneously:

- it addresses the need of companies for higher qualifications - in particular within the context of intra-company organisational development;
- it addresses the needs of the individual employees - particularly those with low qualifications - with regard to further training and education;
- it solves the problem of "replacement employees" for those undergoing training in small and medium-sized companies;
- it can help the unemployed to take the first step towards reintegration in the labour market.

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Chapter 2

Examples for fields of action and levels of action for trade union further training and education policy

2.2

Field of action: possibilities and limits of further training and education

Example: The “Equal Opportunities Programme” of the Electricity Supply Board (ESB) in Ireland

The "Equal Opportunities Programme" of the Electricity Supply Board (ESB) in Ireland

Many people - including some of those in the trade unions - often have the impression that further training and education is a "cure-all" that ensures modernisation of companies whilst also expanding the freedom and options of the employees. The risk in this approach is that difficulties encountered in the process of modernisation are attributed to the individual failure of employees. From the point of view of the trade unions, therefore, it is important to develop a more comprehensive concept of modernisation in which further training and education is linked to other elements. The Irish example shows the use of this type of strategy in the endeavour to promote equal opportunities for women at the workplace. In this strategy, further training and education is only one element in a more comprehensive process of change of intra-company structures towards equal opportunities. The example clearly shows that changes in the occupational situation of the individual cannot be achieved through efforts in the field of further training alone. The Irish model combines further training and education measures with the implementation of national legislation on equality at the workplace. The example also shows that it is necessary to create new organisational structures in order to implement the strategy of equality and monitor its effects.

1. What are the main features of this approach?

The semi-state run Irish Electricity Supply Board (ESB) in Dublin is pursuing a structured programme for the creation of equal opportunities for women at the workplace and in the work hierarchy (Positive Action Programme). The *comprehensive goals* extend beyond further training and education per se and include:

- changing conventional attitudes towards female employees;
- improving the qualification of female employees to promote their career within the company;
- increasing the proportion of female employees on the various hierarchy levels;
- combating sexual harassment;

adapting working conditions (or making them more flexible) in order to cater to the specific needs of women (maternity leave, career "outtimes", job-sharing);

underlining the economic advantages of equal opportunities for women.

Various training and *education measures* are organised to achieve these goals.

A short seminar lasting around 1 1/2 hours on the topic of "sexual harassment" is held for groups of a maximum of 25 male and female employees. Alongside detailed information on the change in company policy and explanation and definition of the term "sexual harassment", the course also tells employees what actions to take in the event of sexual harassment.

The course entitled *"men and women working together"* with up to 14 participants lasts two days and looks at the company policy of the ESB with regard to questions of equality, problems associated with men and women working together, and the different criteria used for men and women at the workplace. An attempt is made to influence traditional attitudes in the direction of greater equality for women. This strategy is promoted using interactive methods: teamwork, self-reflection, exercises and discussion. The *training programme "Career development for women"* is made up of an initial two-day programme and a third course day three months later for to 16 female participants. The learning objectives are:

- identification and development of the participants' own abilities and career interests in order to allow optimum assessment of career potential at the ESB;
- determination of training measures required to achieve the career goal;
- development of personal plans of action;
- the use of personal effectiveness techniques.

The two-day course block is initially geared towards identifying attitudes, motivations and personal characteristics and extends to the practicing of goal-oriented action: identification of goals, analysis of chances and barriers, compilation of a plan of action, and the use of communication techniques to achieve the stated goals. The *training programme "Personal effectiveness for women"* has the same duration and composition. The learning objectives are to provide support for the individual in setting her own objectives, to acquire key interpersonal techniques, and to identify, develop and utilise effective work techniques. The first day of the course focuses on the training of self-confidence and effective communication techniques, whilst the second day is devoted to stress management and confidence in dealings with others.

2. What problems does the approach address?

The approach is a reaction to the limitations of conventional technical further training and education and is geared towards improving the career prospects of female employees as well as fully utilising the potential of female employees within the company. What is apparent is that it is often more difficult for women to gain access to technical further training and education, and that higher qualifications often do little to improve the position of female employees within the company.

On the other hand, this approach also outlines the options which arise when further training and education is extended to include contents other than the conventional technical elements and is integrated in a programme of action geared towards promoting the interests of women. The latter aspect is one of the central objectives of the trade unions. It also requires the creation of new organisational structures to accompany implementation and to serve as a monitoring function for realisation. For the extension of further training and education options alone is not sufficient to achieve an improvement in the occupational position of women. The Irish example therefore also describes the limitations of further training and education as an isolated measure.

The most common jobs at the ESB are skilled technucal jobs. As structural criteria and social prejudice dictate that most of these jobs (and in particular the jobs of electrical fitters and engineers) are reserved for the men, the ESB is heavily male-dominated. In Ireland - as in other countries - these jobs are seen as being traditionally "non-female". It therefore comes as no surprise to learn that of the 10,800 or so employees of the ESB, around only 1,800 are women (17%).

Social value judgements and male-dominated selection procedures meant that, with the exception of the secretarial sector, women were severely "under-represented", particularly at the higher hierarchy levels.

3. How was this approach developed?

The starting point for the "equal opportunity" activities of the ESB was neither trade union initiative nor management concept but two laws dating back to the seventies which the government wanted to promote following many years of inadequate implementation in the public and semi-public sector. These laws were

- the Anti-Discrimination Pay Act of 1974 and
- the Employment Equality Act of 1977.

These laws apply exclusively to women and are mainly of a protective character; in other words, they do not require active measures on the part of the companies, but they do indicate the direction in which activities should be pointed. (The two laws are currently being revised with the aim of including further disadvantaged groups). It is interesting to note that the trade unions consider the private sector to be more active than the public sector in its anti-discrimination efforts.

In 1988, the ESB drew up an "Equality policy and a practical equality guideline", in which the following is stated:

"The ESB is committed to the principle of equal opportunities in its personnel policy. The company will ensure that no applicant is disadvantaged on account of his or her sex or marital status. Individuals will be selected, promoted and treated on the basis of their ability and merits as well as in line with the requirements of the job. They will all be given the opportunity to prove their capabilities and to progress within the organisation."

In order to promote implementation of this guideline, a special Equality Review Group was formed after about two years and was given the job of studying "the reality of equal opportunities for women in the ESB and compiling a report with recommendations". The 25 recommendations from this group led to the creation of the Equality Council in 1991 chaired by external specialists. This central body made way for the Joint Equality Council (made up of management and trade unions) after a further two years. During the process of decentralisation of the company organisation (division of the ESB into five decentral company units and one central unit), the central Joint Equality Council will be replaced by local equality councils.

Much importance is attached to ensuring that the policy of equality is taken seriously by all those involved, including (in particular) top management. For this reason, the Equality Council organised a special equality seminar for top management in 1992 which was opened by the competent government Minister. Moreover, external experts regularly draw up management briefing documents on equality tailored to the needs of management which are distributed to 450 managers at the ESB.

4. Who is involved?

A total of eight trade unions are represented among the workforce of the ESB, and they form the "ESB Group of Unions". Four of these unions are craft unions for skilled employees. Only the four unions who have female members at the ESB are entitled to name representatives for the Joint Equality Council.

These four unions, including the Services Industrial Professional Technical Union (SIPTU) now have the majority on the nine-member JEC together with the chairperson, who is appointed by the Irish trade union umbrella organisation, the ICTU (Irish Congress of Trade Unions).

The JEC meets around once a month and its work is effective (according to both the employers and the employees). Its main duties and rights are:

- to observe the progress of equality measures in the company. This "observation function" is based on the 1990 equality report with its 25 recommendations as well as on a recently submitted report on "social relations" within the company;
- taking up questions associated with equality on its own initiative;
- helping to change the attitudes of employees and to create a new company culture which promotes equality.

The ESB Group of Unions has an office at the ESB, via which equality-related complaints can be introduced for discussion at the regular negotiations between trade unions and the company management. The four trade unions not represented on the JEC also use the facilities of this office.

5. What resources and instruments are available?

Alongside the training programmes outlined above, a wide range of additional instruments were created to implement the overall equality programme, such as:

- a special Equal Opportunities Department within the personnel department;
- a computer-supported information system for questions of equality (Personal Management Information System - PMIS);
- a support and counselling group against sexual harassment;
- local Equality Committees;
- a Joint Equality Council made up of representatives of management and trade unions;
- a special logo for the uniform image of the programme which graphically links the corporate identity of the ESB with its equality endeavours;
- an annual intra-company Equality Week with a wide range of activities and examples from the overall programme.

The Equal Opportunities Department (EOD) is directly answerable to the head of personnel and is made up of three full-time employees: the (currently) male Equal Opportunities Manager and two (currently female) administrative employees.

Out of the total budget of the Equal Opportunities Department, around 48% go towards funding training measures. All courses and seminars are paid for by the EOD; some of these courses, however, take place outside regular working hours. These include the relatively expensive programme "Men and women working together", which is held at weekends in a hotel to create a more conducive atmosphere.

The courses "Career development for women" and "Personal effectiveness for women" are also held at the company's own training centre in Dublin. The ESB has contracted external counsellors and trainers to hold these two courses as well as the "Men and women working together" seminar. The short seminar on sexual harassment is held by employees of the EOD themselves.

As a result of the planned division of the ESB into different "sub-companies", the personnel and financial resources of the EOD will also be divided up in future. There are fears that this might reduce rather than increase the range of equality-oriented activities if the central stimulus is lost. These fears are fuelled by the fact that, in contrast to the JEC, the decentral equality committees have been rather "lifeless" up to the present.

Alongside the special equality measures funded by the ESB, the trade unions also organise independent programmes for their female members nationwide from their own funds.

6. What is the current assessment of the approach?

Since 1991, a total of 932 women have taken part in the Career Development Programme, whilst over 800 women have attended the Personal Effectiveness courses. This means that the majority of all female employees of the ESB have taken part in the programme, also including those female employees who have only elementary jobs (e.g. canteen personnel).

Surveys have shown that the participants rate the courses very highly. The responses show that the female employees particularly appreciated the efforts to promote their self-confidence and determination. These are skills which are not linked to any specific requirements of the workplace or the company but which are transferable in the widest sense.

It was also seen as a positive factor that the courses are held by external trainers, as this allowed employees to be more frank and open. The two course types have now been completed for the time being and are to be continued at a later date together with male participants - this latter idea was also welcomed by the female course participants.

The assessment of "Men and women working together" seminars was not as positive. During this type of seminar, all the old prejudices, rivalries and other tension and conflict from the workplace come to the surface, and the appropriate selection of female and male participants was therefore decisive for the success of the seminar.

With regard to the overall success of the equal opportunities programme, it is interesting to note how the percentage of female employees in the various white-collar categories at the ESB has changed since 1991:

	April 1991	April 1994	Change
Top management	2	5	150%
Middle management	27	53	96%
Lower management	154	232	51%
Office employees	1087	1112	2%
Technical white-collar	337	430	28%

The figures show a clear increase in the number of female employees in all categories with the exception of office employees, a group in which female employees are traditionally dominant anyway. The changes are without doubt due to the training programmes and the changed attitudes in the personnel management department. Nevertheless, there are complaints that it is extremely difficult to integrate the lower and middle management echelons in equality-oriented activities.

7. What is the status of this approach within the context of trade union further training and education policy?

The ESB programme is an isolated example in a single (albeit big) company. The trade unions support the ESB programme and are involved in its implementation. Nevertheless, there are still many communication deficits. One example is that the management and/or the EOD in the company are not fully informed about trade union activities in the area of equality.

Moreover, there are still serious points of conflict within the area of equality. This applies in particular to the problem of equal wages; indeed, legal proceedings against the ESB are currently in progress on this issue.

As mentioned above, the trade unions also organise their own training programmes for their members to support the creation of equal opportunities - an issue they strongly support. However, the interest of individual trade unions in the issue of equality and the scope of their activities depends largely on the strength of female membership in the union in question. The willingness to support equality is particularly small in the technical and craft sectors, and there is much need for development here. There are also conflicts of interest when one party attempts to gain greater benefits for female employees within the context of a preset wage increase framework, as any such increase is necessarily at the expense of the male employees.

8. What stimuli does the approach provide for a transfer of experience?

Although the equality-oriented activities of the Irish Electricity Supply Board have their roots in corresponding Irish legislation, these activities are, in the final analysis, not bound by any special legal preconditions. There are similar laws in some of the other EU member states. Last not least, the European "Directive on the realisation of equal opportunities for men and women with regard to access to employment, vocational training and promotion as well as with regard to working conditions" (No. 76/207 of 9/2/1976) has been in existence since 1976.

The equal opportunities programme of the ESB, which is organised and implemented in cooperation with the trade unions and which can boast provable success, is therefore an initiative of which many aspects appear suitable for transfer.

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Chapter 2

Examples for fields of action and levels of action for trade union further training and education policy

2.3

Field of action: company and individual interests

Example: The “NVQ system” in Great Britain

The British NVQ system (National Vocational Qualifications)

Vocational further training and education is always in a potential field of conflict between the interests of the company on the one hand and the interests of the individual on the other. The company's interests in promoting the skills and qualifications of their employees are geared towards the use of new technologies, making intra-company organisation routines more effective, increasing productivity and product quality and, last not least, "tying" these skills to the company. The interests of the individual in the field of further training and education, on the other hand, are geared towards securing and extending skills and competence when faced with new technical and organisational requirements, securing themselves against the risks of the labour market, extending skills to promote horizontal and vertical mobility and, last not least, acquiring transferable (i.e. company-independent) qualifications. The British NVQ system shows initial ways in which these conflicts could possibly be tackled. Due to the modular structure and the informal training routes, the acquisition of the NVQ can take place in a context which is relevant to the situation within the company in question. The company may also pursue a qualification policy geared towards its own needs. The employees involved in the NVQ programme can compile their own "qualification biography" in line with their own interests both horizontally (different skills) and vertically (different requirement levels) - both with regard to the level of the qualification and the scheduling of training periods. The problem remains, however, that the requirement levels and skills are certificate-based and not part of a curriculum. The bias towards certificated skills would seem to conflict with the goal of building up a broadly based system of initial vocational training which could serve as a basis for further training and education.

1. What are the main features of this approach?

The NVQ system is a modular, practice-oriented certification/validification system for vocational training. This still quite new system is based on the recognition of core skills and standard abilities defined for each occupational field. Each certificate is awarded on the basis of a list of tasks which the applicant has to prove he or she can master. These tasks form an NVQ unit. A set of these units then makes up an NVQ. The way in which the ability to master the task was acquired is irrelevant. Neither is it necessary to provide evidence of a minimum training period or submit a successful diploma for initial training. The system therefore makes no distinction between vocational training in the form of initial training and vocational further training and education. The system of NVQ qualification is open to all age groups above 16. The system also attempts to render academic and non-academic training comparable and/or equivalent on the corresponding level.

Due to its modular structure and high degree of flexibility, the NVQ system claims to take into account the needs of both national economy and individual company with regard to the marked improvement of qualifications among the workforce as well as catering to the needs and wishes of the individual. The interests of the individual are supposed to be promoted in particular by the low access hurdles and general recognition of the certificates.

Proof of competence for the certificate is preferably effected at the workplace. In the case of college-based or extra-company training, proof of competence is to be effected in a near-workplace environment. Tests and special examinations are only staged as supplementary measures if it is not possible to provide evidence of specific required skills at the workplace itself.

There are currently five requirement levels for the NVQ certificates:

- *Level 1:* competence in a number of skills mostly consisting of routine tasks.
- *Level 2:* competence in a not-too-narrow range of different skills in different contexts. Some of the skills have to be complex (i.e. not all skills can be elementary); teamwork may often be required.
- *Level 3:* competence in a broad range of activities in a wide spectrum of contexts. Most tasks are of a complex nature and require responsibility as well as a certain degree of personnel leadership skill.
- *Level 4:* similar to level 3, but a higher degree of autonomy and greater personnel leadership skills are required as well as the ability to make independent decisions on the use of resources.
- *Level 5:* skills comprising the application of fundamental principles and complex technology. The requirements in terms of personnel leadership and resource planning are even more demanding.

Level 3 ("NVQ3") is designed to be equivalent to the traditional full-time school education in Great Britain (two "A" Levels). On an international level, NVQ3 is supposed to equivalent to a successfully completed apprenticeship, a German "Abitur" and a French "Baccalaureat".

The overall system of NVQs forms a matrix in which those willing to learn can move both horizontally (different skills) as well as vertically (different requirement levels).

The requirement schedules are drawn up by various organisations - in particular the leading bodies for the various industrial sectors (industry lead bodies) and the "awarding bodies". The latter are examination committees with responsibility for assessing vocational training courses. At national level, the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ) is responsible for the recognition of the requirements (which are identical in England and Wales). The NCVQ also maintains a databank of all qualifications and their interrelationships (National Database of Vocational Qualifications) to make it easier to use the NVQ system. The individual is presented with a personal national education document called the National Record, made up of the four following parts:

- the personal report with various details on attained goals in different areas,
- the plan of action with tailored objectives,
- the certificate of progress detailing the attained goals or completed intermediate stages,
- the diplomas which also contain the certificates for attained NVQs.

The Scottish Vocational Education Council (SCOTVEC) is working on a similar system in Scotland. The goal is to achieve maximum convergence of the two systems without impairing the autonomy and the special status of the SCOTVEC.

2. What problems does the approach address?

Under the old system of vocational qualification in Great Britain, there were no national standards and no relevant diplomas at all for many occupations. Although it was relatively easy to apply for an apprenticeship, the system overall was so complicated that only few employers and employees were able to fully understand it. The traditional access barriers were a further major problem - particularly for women - and these barriers had become something of an anachronism.

A further important factor behind the reorganisation of the system was the serious competitive disadvantage of British industry resulting from qualification levels. The trade unions are also extremely worried about the fact that only around 40% of the British workforce have completed an apprenticeship or attained 2 "A" Levels, compared to 70% in Germany and almost 80% in France. This situation made it necessary to improve not only the training and education of young people but also and in particular the qualifications of those already in employment. Although the NVQ system was created to remedy the deficits of the extremely elementary system of vocational training in the UK, it offers both the companies and the individual the opportunity to pursue their own interests in the area of vocational further training and education. In order to ensure that this balance between company and individual interests is maintained, it is also important that the trade unions are now taking a greater part in the NVQ system.

3. How was this approach developed?

The general need to make up lost ground in the area of qualification was one of the main reasons for the development of a totally new NVQ system which no longer makes a distinction between initial vocational training and further training and education. In 1985, the British government set up a working group with the aim of compiling a comprehensive status report on the situation in the field of vocational training. A year later, this group recommended the reorganisation of vocational training in line with the new NVQs as well as the creation of a new central body, the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ). The government was quick to implement these proposals on the basis of its 1986 white paper on "Education and Training - Working Together".

4. Who is involved?

The NVQ bodies are generally dominated by the employers. The trade unions are not always represented on the industry lead bodies, and when they are represented, their relative "weighting" differs from that of the employers and the representatives of occupational groups. One positive example with regard to trade union involvement is the health sector, where the Care Sector Consortium (CSC) has taken on the role of the industry lead body. The CSC meets every three months and is made up of representatives of the trade unions, the state health service, and the employers' organisations in a kind of tripartite parity. One of the basic problems for the trade unions is that they have no legal entitlement to participate in the various bodies. A further problem from the point of view of the trade unions is that the many researchers on the industry lead bodies use a specialist terminology which is sometimes hard for the trade union representatives to understand.

The Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) and Labour and Enterprise Councils (LECs) play an important role in the promotion of vocational training. There are 82 such institutions in Britain on local and/or regional level. The TECs and LECs (referred to as TECs in the following) support industry in the field of vocational training and further training and education and, more importantly, manage the funds which are provided by the government for labour market and training/educational purposes and which are therefore used for NVQ-relevant activities.

The TECs are private-law organisations dominated by the employers. There are no legal stipulations regarding participation of the trade unions on the boards of these institutions. Nevertheless, the trade unions are represented on around 75% of the TECs to varying degrees. However, this has not necessarily resulted in functioning communication between the TECs and the trade unions. On the one hand, many trade unions have little idea about the function of and the options provided by the TECs despite the fact that they are represented on the management board, whilst on the other hand the TEC managers are not sufficiently familiar with the internal situation of the locally fragmented trade union organisations.

5. What resources and instruments are available?

The most important instruments from the point of view of the trade unions are the collective negotiations, through which the unions hope to push through their demands for an NVQ system for a maximum number of employees on a par with conventional training. The trade unions have drawn up numerous action guidelines for their activists to promote this aim. The GMB and TGWU trade unions have developed a model agreement for training on company level.

The TUC trade union umbrella organisation is meanwhile also supporting communication between TECs and trade unions on a full-time basis in model projects. It has, for example, concluded a "partnership agreement" with the South Thames Training and Enterprise Council with the express aim of increasing the number of companies in which questions concerning training and further training and education are discussed by trade unions and management from around 20% to 40%.

A further important instrument which is also supported and actively promoted by the trade unions is the government programme "Investors in People" (IIP). The IIP is a standard for the certification of companies on the basis of the quality, extent and concept of further training. The IIP certificate is awarded by the TECs and comes with a financial incentive funded by the government. Up to the present time, however, only around 5% of the potential recipient companies have been awarded an IIP certificate.

6. What is the current assessment of the approach?

Although the open nature and flexibility of the NVQ system make it appear attractive - at least in theory - there is the risk that training and further training and education are only organised on the basis of need and within the narrow context of the company workplace. This tends to work against the aim of ensuring a solid, broadly based basic training system with potential for development.

The trade unions have recognised this danger and are now demanding that the NVQs should also possess "breadth and depth". The relevant trade union brochure states the following:

"They must impart transferable skills and broadly based knowledge, so that the employees in question can also work in other sectors of the economy and are also in a position to achieve higher standards."

The government hopes to combat this deficit in the area of basic training by introducing a new system of promoted apprenticeship training in important occupations ("modern apprenticeship"), a system which is also supported by the trade unions.

A further problem is that the companies are reluctant to shoulder the additional financial cost and personnel effort needed to improve training. Indeed, some companies see the training budgets as serving purely PR purposes. The employees who are supposed to organise training and certification often have insufficient time to do so and are frequently not trained for this task. Some companies prefer to attract well-trained employees from other companies by offering them higher wages (poaching) than investing in their own training programmes (coaching).

There have also been complaints that the certification system is not fair; this problem is aggravated by the fact that the "assessors" are not neutral outsiders but colleagues or superiors from the immediate working environment with all its dependencies and tensions.

In the colleges, there are critics who believe that, in spite of its modular structure, the NVQ system is too unwieldy due to the required nationwide uniformity. These critics prefer college-specific certificates, which can be developed more rapidly and adapted to the needs of the labour market and the requirements of technological progress.

Although the NVQ approach is expressly supported by the trade union leaderships, many observers still believe that it has not yet fully proven its worth in practice.

7. What is the status of this approach within the context of trade union further training and education policy?

The umbrella organisation of the British trade unions (the TUC) supports the endeavour to award 1.2 million NVQ certificates by the year 1996 and to put half of the around 24 million employees in Great Britain into training courses leading to NVQ certificates. The TUC is therefore doing all it can to ensure that the question of qualification plays a greater role in the context of collective negotiations. The main objective is to force the employers to draw up training plans and training budgets on company level. According to the government report "Training in Britain", only around 25% of companies actually do this at present. The TUC wants employers and trade unions to cooperate in the determination of training requirements, to draw up a plan of action, and to organise a system for monitoring the success of training measures. The TUC is, for example, proud of the fact that negotiations between employers and trade unions were instrumental in setting up an "Employee Development and Support Programme" at the British Ford car plants. Although the biggest blue-collar trade union, the GMB, reports progress in the case of individual companies (e.g. ICI and Rowntree Macintosh), it still sees much room for improvement.

In 1990, qualification played a role in only 19% of all local collective negotiations in which the trade unions were involved. This is in stark contrast to the figures for the importance attached to work safety (35%) and, above all, wages (93%).

In addition, the trade unions are also faced with a lack of awareness on the part of employees. A Gallup poll conducted in 1992 showed that only around 50% of employees believed that better training would improve their performance at the workplace or improve the output of their company. Only around 40% had heard about the NVQ system.

Moreover, the TUC is also demanding that the long-term unemployed are also trained within the NVQ system. In this connection, one of the criticisms levelled by the TUC is that the government programmes "Employment Training" and "Employment Action" are inadequate. According to these criticisms, only 30% of the graduates from the Employment Training programme receive certificates which were of any use and more than two-thirds of them are still unemployed three months later.

The TUC also attaches special importance to (further) training and education for women, including those returning to work after their children have grown up. One of the main reasons for this commitment is that, as was shown by the "Women and training" survey conducted by the Equal Opportunities Commission, women were still markedly "under-represented" in all types of training and further education at the end of the eighties.

The lack of awareness among employees with regard to training options has led to a situation in which the trade unions at local level attach far less importance to training needs than the TUC umbrella organisation. The TUC, which is committed without reservation towards promoting the qualification of the workforce, has therefore called on all trade unions to "negotiate for increased skills".

In it dealings with employers, the TUC endeavours to ensure that the training objectives are "shared by employers and employees" (so-called joint ownership concept). Accordingly, they are striving to ensure equality-based participation in the bodies and committees that define the NVQs. There are still serious deficits in this area. In return, the TUC is offering the employers partnership and support in the realisation of training goals (joint action).

The NVQs for trade union officials are a special case. In this area, the TUC itself plays the role of industry lead body. There was initial resistance to the efforts of the GMB central office to apply for the certificate "Investors in People". The main problem was that the NVQs and the IIP standard were based on an initiative of the employers and the government, both of whose interests conflict with those of the trade unions. There are also far closer traditional links to the opposition Labour Party. The eventual strategy, which caused much tension, was therefore to "do business" with the government in an area that was considered to be beneficial and to apply and develop the relevant instruments in line with the interests of the trade unions.

8. What stimuli does the approach provide for a transfer of experience?

The NVQ system is not based on any specific legal or institutional preconditions, and due to its modular design and flexibility can be adapted to different frameworks and situations. In practice, it is more or less irrelevant whether state norms or agreements between employers and trade unions play the more dominant role. The adaptability of the system is further enhanced by the fact that the awarding of certificates is based on results rather than training history: in other words, it is not bound by considerations of the type and duration of training. On the other hand, however, this also means that it is limited to the requirement profiles of the companies and that it is therefore not geared towards the acquisition of transferable qualifications.

Continuous Vocational Training in Europe - Documentation on the Social Dialogue

Chapter 2

Examples for fields of action and levels of action for trade union further training and education policy

2.4

Field of action: implementation of agreements

Example: Financing regulations for further training and education in France

Financing regulations for further training and education in France

Funding regulations for further training and education can influence both access options as well as the compensation for the various ways in which companies finance further training and education. The way in which funds are raised and the way in which these funds are allocated determine the structures and developments within the system of further training and education which are significant for equality of opportunities and the reconciliation of interests. The organisational concepts in the countries of Europe range from funding by the individual company and the individual employee at on end of the scale to collective concepts at the other; a combination of these two extremes is found in most countries, and these can be considered "mixed concepts". Further training and education geared towards the needs of the companies is generally funded by the companies, further training and education geared towards personal interests is mainly financed by the individuals concerned, and further training for the unemployed is funded on the basis of collective (state) rulings; these funding concepts are supplemented by state subsidies for companies and individuals. In a number of countries, employers and trade unions have reached agreement on funding concepts (examples can be found in France, Belgium, Spain, Portugal and the Netherlands). These agreements on national or sectoral level then have to be implemented in the relevant institutions and above all on company level. Accordingly, the implementation of agreements is one of the fields of action in which the trade unions can realise their objectives. There are various different problem-solving approaches in the different European countries. France is the country with one of the most highly developed system of agreements between employers and trade unions in the field of further training and education. The example of France is used to show the specific problems with regard to implementation and the options open to the trade unions to solve these problems.

1. What are the main features of this approach?

The funding of further training and education in France is based on a complex system of regulations based on collective agreements and state legislation. Employers and management conduct negotiations in the area of further training and education above all on national transsectoral level as well as on sectoral level. There are organisational and financing agreements which govern

- individual training leave,

- the intra-company training plan and
- measures to integrate young people in the working environment (measures which in France are also classified as further training and education).

The results of the agreements are subsequently incorporated in national labour legislation and therefore rendered generally binding. In addition, there are also agreements on (qualification-dependent) classification criteria and, more recently, the valdification and recognition of qualifications.

This traditional system has three main characteristics:

- In a number of sectors, the parity-based self-administration ("gestion paritaire") of employers and trade unions is the central element in the organisation of further training and education.
- The further training and education system has its own internal "momentum", as employers and trade unions are obliged by agreements and also by legal regulations to conduct regular follow-up negotiations at maximum intervals of 5 years.
- There is also a certain degree of "interaction" between the agreements between employers and trade unions and national labour law. The contents of the agreements are incorporated in national labour legislation.

2. What problems does the approach address?

The development of the further training and education system in France can be seen as a reaction to the deficits in the qualifications of the workforce (which all sides - employers, trade unions and the state - agree exist) and the growing qualification requirements of industry. The system provides an answer to the varying needs of companies and employees in the area of further training and education; the provisions in the agreements are also geared towards the specific needs of small and medium-sized companies.

The varying needs in the field of further training and education are catered to by a system which - from the point of view of those concerned - covers all vocational training measures following compulsory schooling and outside the state education system. The system is made up of three areas:

- company-based training plans ("Plan de Formation"),
- training leave ("Congé Individuel de Formation"),
- integration of young people entering the labour market ("Insertion des Jeunes").

There is also an individual right to have a "qualification status report" compiled ("Bilan de Compétences) - mostly in connection with training leave - as well as (since the July 1994 agreement between employers and trade unions) a training time account ("Capital Temps de Formation") as the link between the individual right to further training and education on the one hand and the company interest in further training and education on the other.

3. How was this approach developed?

The French system of further training and education is based on agreements between the employers and the trade unions. It dates back to the year 1969, when - under the arbitration of the Pompidou government - the trade unions and employers agreed to improve the system of further training and education in order to help to solve the problems within French society. The starting point was therefore a tripartite agreement between the state, the employers, and the trade unions; the organisations representing the employers and the employees were then to negotiate the provisions and regulations. This practice established a process of "interaction" between the agreements between employers and trade unions and the legal regulations. The first agreement was concluded in 1970 and raised to the status of law a year later, thus becoming legally binding. The agreement and law of 1970/71 stipulated a general right to further training and education for all employees and a funding duty on the part of the employers. Initially, however, there were still no organisational provisions for the fulfilment of this right to further training and education. It was not until 1982 that the individual right to further training and education was formally laid down in the agreement on training leave (Congé Individuel de Formation) as the right to be absent from the workplace for the purpose of further training and education.

4. Who is involved?

The agreements are concluded between employers and trade unions on national (transsectoral) level and on sector level. On national level, the parties involved are the umbrella organisations of the recognised trade unions with collective bargaining powers (CFDT, CGT-FO, CGT, CGC) and, for the employers, the CNPF (industrial employers) and the CGPME (small and medium-sized companies) who represent the most important sectors of commerce and industry. The agreements are generally first "hammered out" between these organisations, and the other sectors (agriculture, retail, crafts, social services and the health service) follow this lead with similar agreements as well as special rulings for part-time employees. The public sector has its own provisions and is not directly incorporated in this system of agreements. Organisational implementation of the agreements is effected by the jointly managed institutions of employers and trade unions. On company level, the parity-based employee councils (Comité d'entreprise as a joint committee of employers and workforce chaired by the employer) and the intra-company trade union sections are involved in implementation. The law stipulates that the intra-company training plan is to be drawn up in consultation with the Comité d'entreprise, and if the Comité rejects the plan, direct negotiations have to held between the employer and the trade unions represented in the company.

5. What resources and instruments are available?

The French system of further training and education is regulated by several interacting instruments. The companies are legally bound to spend 1.5% of the gross payroll total on further training and education (as defined in France - i.e. including occupational integration measures for young employees) and to provide proof of this to the state. If they do not fulfil this obligation, they have to pay an additional levy to the state. Proof takes the form of an intra-company training plan. This plan is as follows for companies with more than 10 employees in the industrial sector: 0.9% of the gross payroll for measures within the context of intra-company training planning, 0.2% for individual training leave, and 0.4% for the integration of young employees. A total levy of 0.15% was agreed for the small companies with fewer than 10 employees. In the latter sector, an additional mechanism is also effective: the funding obligation is fulfilled by a levy paid into contractually stipulated funds for training leave and for the measures for the integration of young employees in general and for further training and education within the framework of the intra-company training plan in a number of sectors of the economy. These funds are organised on regional or sectoral level, where the monies are spent on training measures; this redistribution of funds is known as "Mutualisation". Agreement-based regulations always have priority over legal regulations: the parties to the collective agreements can agree on regulations which differ from the legal regulations. The sanction of an additional levy in the case of non-fulfilment of funding obligations means that the companies generally fulfil these obligations (even when there is no agreement-based stipulation). The average expenditure of companies on vocational training at the beginning of the nineties was 3.2%, well above the legally stipulated minimum.

The funds laid down in the collective agreements are organised on a parity-representation basis; in the big sectors such as metalworking, chemicals and banks, the only funds that exist are managed solely by the employers. The funds organise the collection of levies and their utilisation: the OPACIF (Organisation Paritaire de Congé Individuel de Formation), which is divided into 34 regional organisations (FONGECIF - Fonds de Gestion du Congé Individuel de Formation) for training leave; the total of 96 FAFs (Fonds d'Assurance de Formation), which are subdivided on a regional, transsectoral and sectoral basis, for the intra-company training plan, the OCA (Organisme Collecteurs Agréé) for the small companies, the OMA (Organisme Mutualisateur Agéé) for the integration of young people, and the AGEFAL (Association de Gestion pour les Fonds de l`Alternance) on a regional basis.

Further training and education within the context of the intra-company training plan is the most important type of training in quantitative terms, numbering around 3.5 million participants each year compared to around 30,000 who take training leave. The FAFs alone collected and distributed funds totalling 5.5 billion Francs (= approx. 0.9 million Ecus) in 1992 on the basis of 5.7 million employees. The companies can submit their intra-company training plan to the funds and apply for funding for the measures contained therein.

Individual training leave is primarily geared towards the needs of less well qualified employees without formal diplomas. Employees can apply to the relevant fund organisation (which is generally located on regional level) for training leave, and this organisation makes a decision on funding. Before submitting the application, the employee can have an individual competence status report compiled (bilan de compétence) which provides information on his or her qualifications and development options. The granting of training leave applications is based on the criteria of qualification (the less well qualified have priority) and usefulness on the labour market (secondary criterion). The funds generally finance only part of the costs: 80% of the wage for adaptation measures, 90% for retraining leading to a qualified diploma, and - depending on the regional fund - around 95% of the costs of the course. This system clearly shows the principle of the "co-financing" of further training and education which - as mentioned above - was extended by a collective agreement of 1991 to cover certain measures within the context of intra-company training planning. Around 50,000 applications for training leave are filed each year, around 30,000 of which are approved. The funding volume available for these measures is 3.25 billion Francs (= approx. 0.55 billion Ecus). With an average duration of 950 training hours, one training leave costs 130,000 Francs (= approx. 21,000 Ecus). These figures show that training leave in France is used for qualifying measures of medium duration.

The "training time account", which was introduced by the agreement of July 1994, is an attempt to integrate individual training leave with intra-company training planning. From 1996, companies will pay a levy of 0.1 % for training leave and a further 0.1 % for the new training time account system. New parity-based bodies will be set up at sectoral level for the organisation and funding of these measures, and integration and coordination with the intra-company training plan will be effected on company level. It will then also be possible to use the training leave system for intra-company qualification projects, which must be in line with the further training and education goals to be agreed at sectoral level; in this event, the company will be reimbursed for 50 % of the costs by the new fund.

6. What is the current assessment of the approach?

In the past, the system of compulsory negotiations and the sanctions implemented in the case of non-fulfilment of training obligations have led to a continuous process of adjustment of the further training and education system to new challenges as well as - on company level - to an increased awareness on the part of employees for the necessity of further training and education. There are, however, a small number of critics who complain that the financing provisions are "over-organised" and that these provisions are often difficult for companies and employees to understand.

The obligation on companies to draw up an intra-company training plan is fulfilled in various ways and to varying degrees: practices range from mere formal fulfilment based on proof of expenditure through to detailed qualification plans which pursue and evaluate not only strategic corporate planning objectives but also personnel development goals. The same applies to discussions on the parity-based employee councils (Comité d'entreprise), where practices range from mere formal decision-making and acknowledgement at one end to in-depth discussion of the plan submitted by the employer at the other. The range of activities depends on the commitment of the intra-company representatives of the employees and indicates the strategic status of the company level from the point of view of the trade unions.

On company level, however, collective agreements on further training and education are extremely rare: a total of 131 such agreements were concluded in 1990/91, more than half of which were devoted to questions of the classification of employees according to their qualifications (and therefore to wage categories).

The actual effects of fund-based financing on intra-company training activities are difficult to assess; what is certain is that the agreements have promoted a "culture" of discussion about the development of further training and education. Within this context, however, the quality of intra-company training planning will depend more on the industrial relations on company level, on the problem awareness and problem-solving approaches on this level and - last not least - on the activities of the intra-company representatives of employee interests.

The fund for the financing of intra-company training planning in small and medium-sized companies (OCA) is of little significance and is not used very often; due to the low levy of 0.15%, the available funds are obviously insufficient to have any great effect.

The system of individual training leave, designed to implement the ILO Convention 140 on the vocational further training and education of the less well qualified, is of little significance from a purely quantitative point of view. The funds affiliated to the OPACIF cater to the central fields of the economy numbering around 14 million employees - yet only 50,000 applications are filed (and only 30,000 approved) each year. This is primarily due to the low funding from the 0.2% levy; the French trade unions are therefore pressing for a successive increase in the training leave levy to gradually bring it into line with the intra-company training plan levy. There are, however, signs that the original target group of the less well qualified does not show any pronounced willingness to apply for training leave; this is seen as being due to the fact that participation in training leave measures has no direct relevance to workplace benefits and therefore yields no material advantage (in terms of higher wages and/or promotion). The situation with regard to the qualification status report (Bilan de Compétence) is similar. This individual legal entitlement which precedes training leave is used only seldom. Once again, the main problem is probably that employees do not see it as being relevant to their own further vocational development within the company. Since 1993, the training leave system has been made more accessible to the qualified target groups among the workforce. In view of the still limited funds, however, this will probably not lead to an increase in participation options. The parties were not able to agree on an increase in funding. Instead, the new concept of the training time account (Capital Temps de Formation) is being used to bring training leave more into line with company requirements. It might be possible to reconcile these two interests if the individual freedom of choice is retained and training leave is not used purely to push through the interests of the company. The principle of co-investment could also pave the way for greater consideration of individual needs (in this case the recognition of qualifications) within the framework of the company training plan, as the contribution made by employees in the form of leisure time sacrifice improves the prospects for implementation.

The specific problems associated with the implementation of the collective agreements on further training and education are encountered on various levels:

- firstly, on system level when it comes to the specifics of the general national agreements and their further development. The compulsory follow-up negotiations mean that discussion is already institutionalised. Through the introduction of new elements such as co-investment and training time accounts, the trade unions have entered uncharted territory despite the resistance from within their own ranks;
- then on the level of the parity-based organisations for the management of the funds, particularly with regard to decisions on the utilisation of funds. The funds themselves organise the training of trade union representatives in the fund institutions;
- and finally on company level: the organisation of intra-company training planning and the imminent integration of individual interests via the training time account concept present the employee representatives with new problems and new tasks on company level. This level is the real weak point in the French further training and education system from the point of view of the trade unions.

7. What is the status of this approach within the context of trade union further training and education policy?

In view of the relative weakness of the French unions in terms of membership numbers, the system for the organisation of further training and education opens up major options for trade union influence on the level of system regulation. Up to the present, however, very few links seem to have been established between this area and other trade union fields of action. The negotiations on training issues have meanwhile acquired a certain routine and continuously lead to adjustment and new elements within the system of further training and education; nevertheless, these negotiations are only linked with financial decisions on sector and company level to a minor degree. Only very few companies have agreements on the implementation of sectoral and national agreements, and it is only recently that some of the big companies have introduced an integrated human resources policy. There is currently a debate within the trade unions as to whether negotiations on further training and education - which have been conducted in a more isolated context in the past - should in future be linked with the general negotiations and company-level negotiations on work organisation. In view of the weakness of the trade unions at company level in France - with the exception of the unions in some of the big companies - it is doubtful whether they will be able to make full use of the options for influence in this area. Moreover, there is currently a debate in France on the principle of parity-based action ("gestion paritaire"): the employers want to restrict this practice to matters of basic principle and to manage the vocational training system on a more general basis. The aforementioned agreement concluded in the summer of 1994 - which laid the foundations for the training time account system - also stipulates that the scope of "gestion paritaire" is to be agreed on sectoral level: it should be either a mere "orientation parity" (Parité d'orientation") or a "management parity" (Parité d'administration"). In the sectors in which, beyond the national inter-professional agreements, there is still no jointly supported further training and education policy - namely metalworking, chemicals and banking - this would mean new fields of influence for the trade unions, at least in fundamental questions relating to the field of sectoral vocational training policy.

8. What stimuli does the approach provide for a transfer of experience?

The overall system of further training and education in France must be seen in relation to the specific political, social and cultural traditions of the country. On the whole, it seems to be the case that the interaction of agreements and legal regulations, the organisation of further training and education via funds, and the obligation to conduct follow-up negotiations are a means of overcoming the organisational and funding problems in the field of further training and education. The relevant actors in other countries might well profit by using some of these elements in their own policies. Indeed, the agreements concluded in recent years in Spain and Portugal, and the ideas being considered by the trade unions in Greece and Italy, have much in common with the French model of bipartite and tripartite agreements. This "Latin" model of vocational training is seen by the trade unions in these countries as an alternative to the "Germanic" model based on a dual system of training: the "Latin" model incorporates initial vocational training sponsored by the state with organisation of vocational qualification measures on the basis of collective agreements. The French example shows, however, that this model and its success depends to a large extent on its implementation in the companies and on the "interaction" of trade union activities on the various levels of the system of action.

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Chapter 2

Examples for fields of action and levels of action for trade union further training and education policy

2.5

Level of action: company

Example: company agreements in the Federal Republic of Germany

Company-level agreements in Germany

1. What are the main features of this approach?

In Germany, the participation and co-determination rights of the statutory employee representative body (Betriebsrat - similar to employee council) are governed by the Industrial Constitution Law. Article 77 of this law regulates the possibility of concluding company-level agreements between employers and employee council (Betriebsrat). The employer is responsible for implementing the company agreement.

Art. 77, Para. (4): "Company agreements are directly and compulsorily valid. If rights are granted by the company agreement, a waiver of these rights is only admissible with the approval of the employee council. These rights cannot be excluded..."

Company agreements on wages and other working conditions regulated by a collective agreement between the trade unions and the employers' federations are legally inadmissible, unless this option is explicitly specified in the collective agreement. Bargaining autonomy in line with Art. 9, Para. 3 of the Basic Law therefore has priority over the possibility of concluding company-level agreements.

The conclusion of company-level agreements enables the employee council to improve working conditions and to secure the entitlements of employees. The latter applies in particular to the field of further training and education. During the last ten years, this instrument has been used with increasing frequency in a wide range of fields of action, particularly with a view to reacting rapidly in the interests of the employees to the increasing pace of change in the fields of technology, work organisation and industrial structures. One important factor is therefore the protection of employees against changes which could work to their disadvantage.

It is therefore not surprising that, in connection with changes in work organisation geared towards rationalisation, an increasing number of company agreements have been concluded in recent times. The agreements referred to here are only those company agreements concluded in connection with the introduction of teamwork which also regulate the associated further training and education needs.

The company agreements are negotiated on company level between the employee council and the management. In other words, the trade unions play no part in these negotiations. As, however, 80% of the employee council members in Germany are also trade union members, the trade unions generally develop parameters or sample agreements together with the employee councils, and these sample agreements are then adapted to the specific company needs within the framework of the company-level negotiations.

2. What problems does the approach address?

In the company agreements on the introduction of teamwork, the company agreement instrument is used to cushion the negative effects of work restructuring measures. The agreements are therefore generally a compromise between the interests of the management and those of the employees. The employee council exercises its rights to minimise the risks for the employees of a company as well as to extend its own influence in the organisation of work organisation. In connection with the introduction of teamwork in companies in the metalworking sector, for example, the parameters drawn up by the IG Metall metalworkers trade union are geared towards the following:

- regulations governing the powers of the team; i.e. stipulation of decision-making freedom of team members with regard to rotation, holiday scheduling etc;
- the principle of a "solidarity-based working culture"; i.e. avoiding the risk of excluding the "weaker performers";
- regulations for suitable wage structures for teamwork within the framework of the valid collective agreements;
- the principle of individual and collective qualifications to ensure that rotation is really achieved in the teams;
- extending the direct participation and co-determination of employees with regard to the organisation of the workplace.

These parameters developed by the IG Metall trade union in cooperation with employee councils are designed to serve as a basis for the company-specific conditions to be discussed in the negotiations in the various companies.

3. How was this approach developed?

As mentioned at the outset, the possibility of concluding company-level agreements has long been part of the Industrial Constitution Law. In recent years, however, there have been increasing efforts to actually negotiate at this level. These negotiations are increasingly successful, and more and more companies now operate company-level agreements on the introduction of teamwork. This is closely connected with the partial overlap between the interests of the management and those of the employee council when basic restructuring of work organisation routines are successful.

This partial overlap is clearly shown, for example, in the following preamble to the company agreement on the introduction of teamwork at Adam Opel AG.

"Teamwork is to be introduced at Adam Opel AG in order to retain and improve the competitiveness of the company and to offer the employees improved options for individual development within the context of their working activities."

In view of the new production concepts, the objective of increasing productivity as an entrepreneurial perspective can be combined with the interests of the employees in vocational further development. This reconciliation of interests is possible as the worldwide competitive situation means that the companies can no longer count on automation processes to increase productivity and that the "human resource" factor is becoming increasingly important once again. The so-called "Japanese challenge" and the confrontation with the Japanese production system have shown the extent to which the innovation potential of the employees has been neglected within the context of the Taylor system of work organisation. If, however, the human work potential is to have an innovative effect, some of the restrictions imposed by the traditional Taylor system of work organisation will have to be overcome and employees given a wider range of options for self-development. In contrast to the teamwork experiments within the context of the "humanisation" debate in the 70s and 80s, the more recent debate on teamwork opens up a real opportunity for the partial reconciliation of the interests of the employers in the introduction of new work methods with the interests of the employee councils in improving the working situation. From this point of view, the current process of change in many companies is a precondition for the more widespread conclusion of company-level agreements.

In connection with the introduction of teamwork, however, the qualification of the workforce has become a central factor. For the process of restructuring is hardly possible without systematic qualification-based preparation for the new methods of work organisation and expansion of the range of tasks and work duties. This also opens up the way for the organisation of training for the employees who are directly involved in the production process and who have traditionally been extensively excluded from further training and education measures. The existing company agreements on the introduction of teamwork generally regulate the entitlement to - and the duration of - further training and education.

4. Who is involved?

According to the Industrial Constitution Law, the individual employer and the elected employee council are party to the agreement. Either party can take the initiative to conclude a company agreement. The trade unions are not involved in the negotiation of company agreements. Nevertheless, the employee council can invite a trade union representative to its sessions if a corresponding application is submitted by one fourth of the members or by a majority of the blue-collar or white-collar members on the employee council (Art. 31, Industrial Constitution Law). Since, as mentioned at the outset, the overwhelming majority of the elected employee council members are also members of a trade union, the de facto inclusion of the trade unions in negotiations on company agreements is more or less assured.

5. What resources and instruments are available?

In principle, the resources and instruments negotiated in the company agreement are available. If an agreement is concluded, the employer is obliged to implement the provisions of the agreement. The employee council monitors adherence to this obligation. When company agreements are concluded, the central aim is to define more closely the existing statutory co-determination rights and to extend these rights where possible. In relation to further training and education, this can mean that quotas are stipulated for the participation of individual groups of employees in further training and education measures.

6. What is the current assessment of the approach?

Company agreements can reinforce the individual rights of the employees vis-à-vis the management and therefore make an effective contribution towards minimising the risks in the event of work restructuring measures. In particular, these agreements can secure qualification entitlements and thus greatly improve the vocational development interests of employees in the field of further training and education. These agreements, however, are always limited to the employees of a particular company. This means that the rights laid down in a particular company agreement cannot be transferred to other companies but only apply to the employees in this one company.

The company agreement instrument is perforce dependent on the existence of a strong interesting-representing body. Due to the work exemption regulations and the stipulation of the number of employee councils on the basis of the size of the company in line with the Industrial Constitution Law, company agreements are found most often in big companies. In small and medium-sized companies, on the other hand, this instrument plays only a secondary role.

The most important factor with regard to company agreements is, as ever, actual implementation. The first precondition for this is that the employees in the company are informed about the relevant regulations, and it is in this area that there are still serious deficits. In several companies in which the wage categories had been restructured by company agreements on the introduction of teamwork, we found that the employees were not quite sure how the various components of the overall wage were related to one another. If company agreements are to be successfully implemented, in-depth communication must take place between employee representatives and the employees themselves.

Company agreements are important wherever it is not possible to implement statutory regulations or the provisions of collective agreements but where there are options on the level of the individual company for improving the working situation of the employees. Whether or not a company agreement is feasible generally depends on whether there is any overlap between the interests of the employee council and those of the employer in the questions under discussion, for company agreements can only be achieved on the basis of compromise.

7. What is the status of this approach within the context of trade union further training and education policy?

The company agreement is essentially not a trade union instrument but an instrument used by the intra-company representatives of employee interests, for the German system of industrial relations is characterised by a dualistic structure. Whilst the trade unions act as the representatives of employee interests on the "supra-company", sectoral level, this function is performed by the employee councils on company level. Employee councils are not trade union organs, but bodies which represent the company workforce. As, however, as already mentioned, around 80% of employee council members are also trade union members, the influence of trade unions at company level is nevertheless still considerable. The conclusion of company agreements is, however, clearly the job of the employee councils.

On company level, the respective parties can conduct negotiations on all issues and intra-company fields of action as long as the valid collective agreement is not affected. In recent years, some of the important fields of action have been promotion of women within the company, the layout of computer terminal workplaces, rationalisation protection agreements, intra-company social plans, further training and education agreements and, most recently, the introduction of teamwork. Company agreements are generally geared towards two goals:

1. Extension of the rights of the employees in specific fields of action within the company (e.g. further training and education, promotion of women);
2. Minimisation of risks for the employees in the event of restructuring measures (e.g. company agreements on the introduction of new technologies, company agreements on the introduction of teamwork, rationalisation protection agreements, social plans).

Company agreements are therefore conducted in the often conflicting context of the need for company modernisation and the need for social protection of employees.

In recent years, several trade unions have made some important changes to their strategy in the wake of an internal debate on the effectiveness of company agreements, particularly in the field of further training and education. Experience shows that separate agreements on further training and education have changed very little from the point of view of employees. In contrast, the incorporation of further training and education entitlements in company agreements on other intra-company issues or problems - e.g. those relating to work organisation - has been much more effective. As a result, the trade unions now see the strategic advantages of combining further training and education demands with other intra-company restructuring measures in the context of company agreements.

From the point of view of the trade unions, company agreements can address issues on which it is not (yet) possible to reach agreement in collective negotiations. This means that company agreements can be used to pave the way for the collective negotiation of certain topics, provided that more and more company agreements are concluded in the companies in a certain sector and that the problem definitions can be transferred to other companies in the sector. The increasing number of negotiations on company agreements can therefore be made part of an overall trade union strategy geared towards paving the way for more general regulations to the benefit of employees. The precondition for this development is a continuous process of communication between trade unions and employee councils. The trade union activities in the field of employee council training are of particular importance in this respect.

8. What stimuli does the approach provide for a transfer of experience?

The possibility of concluding company agreements is heavily dependent on the German system of statutory participation and co-determination rights for employee representatives (employee councils) on company level. Transferability to other systems therefore presupposes minimum legally secured negotiation rights between employers and company-level employee representatives. In view of the legal context of company agreements in Germany, a 1:1 transfer will not be possible.

Whilst company agreements in Germany are an instrument which secures important provisions for the workforces of the companies in question (provisions which are not - yet - generally secured by law or collective agreement), they could form a basis for the implementation of general agreements on company level in countries such as Spain and France, where more general regulations on further training and education already exist; for implementation on this level of action is, as our examples show, often a problem.

Moreover, the possibility of transferability applies more to the bigger companies, as it is in these companies that the interest-representing bodies are stronger and more powerful. In other words, only certain aspects of the German example are of interest within the context of the European debate: namely, implementation at company level, preparation of general provisions, and the possibility of extending further training and education rights in big companies.

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2.6

Level of action: sector policy

Example: the printing industry in the Netherlands

The printing industry in the Netherlands

1. What are the main elements in this approach?

The policy of the Dutch trade unions with regard to securing training conditions in collective agreements is traditionally geared towards sectoral provision. One example for this policy within the printing industry is the Graphic Training Centre in Veenendal (GOC), founded in 1977, which is run by the trade unions and the employers as a central training centre for the graphic sector. The new collective agreement which came into effect in the Netherlands in 1994 (the MTV '94) extends the previous sectoral frame of action of the trade union to include participation options on company level.

This collective agreement has introduced basic new elements into the graphic sector: it lays the foundations for closer links between labour market and training policy, creates a basis for the joint organisation of employment policy by the parties to the collective agreement on company level, and separates for the first time the negotiations and the durations of collective agreements (three years) and wage agreements (one year).

According to the new collective agreement, company-level negotiations have to be conducted in the event of basic technological innovations, intra-company restructuring processes and mergers in order to look into the consequences for the employees affected. These negotiations also concern the retraining and further training and education needs of the workforce.

The negotiations take place between the company management and an intra-company negotiating committee for the employees; this committee can hold talks with all employees in order to register the individual qualification interests and workplace changes which help to form the basis for and define its negotiating position. The committee also has the right to invite representatives of the trade unions to the company as counsellors.

The obligation to negotiate and the counselling right of the MTV '94 do not, however, include the obligation to reach an agreement. The parties on company level are merely obliged to draw up a "social plan" containing an employment and a training plan. The MTV '94 includes a priority list introduced by the trade union which is seen as an aid to orientation for company-level negotiations. In addition, it also deals with problems associated with working time rulings, overtime, recruitment of new personnel, illness levels etc. Questions relating to further training and education represent only a small aspect of company-level negotiations, albeit one which is considered to be of major importance by the trade union.

The retraining and further training and education measures negotiated on company level can be held in the company itself, in other companies, as school-based courses or as courses in the GOC; the agreement also promotes retraining for vocations outside the printing industry. The further training and education measures are based on a skeleton law on further training and education adopted in 1991. Since 19993, the legal regulations on full-time school-based vocational training and on dual vocational training have been incorporated in a wide-ranging law on vocational training (WCBO). This law rendered the previous legal regulations on the general education and vocational school system redundant.

2. What problems does the approach address?

The MTV '94 must be seen as the result of the long tradition of sector-specific labour market and employment policy of the Dutch employers and trade unions. It makes reference to the specific context of the graphic sector, in particular with regard to the development of employment and the structure of qualification in the sector, as well as to experiences with sector-related labour market planning.

With around 3,000 graphic companies and 60,000 employees. the printing industry is a small sector within the context of Dutch industry overall. 85% of companies have fewer than 25 employees, whilst the remaining 15% have more employees than the other 85% together.

Over the last ten years or so, there have been two main developmental trends in the graphic industry. *Firstly,* there has been considerable concentration in the printing sector, particularly among the newsprint companies, as a result of mergers and bankruptcies. *Secondly,* there has been increasing specialisation of individual companies within the various sub-segments. In addition, there has been widespread relocation of orders away from the traditional working field of graphic companies and to foreign suppliers in the pre-printing stage. Together with the effects of rationalisation, this trend has cost around 2,000 jobs in the graphic sector in recent years.

The current qualification and employment situation in the graphic industry is characterised by a non-uniform and sometimes contradictory picture. *On the one hand,* unemployment has been high since the beginning of the 80s. In the past, attempts have been made to combat unemployment by organising retraining measures. Today, one of the primary goals of vocational further training is to help solve the employment problems by qualifying employees to cope with the new technologies. The company-based strategy for overcoming problems associated with modernisation (namely to reduce personnel) led to a situation in which hardly any young skilled workers were taken on. This has already led to a "top-heavy" age structure and a qualification deficit among the employees of many companies. *On the other hand,* however, there is already a need for new employees in some companies, for the number of those reaching retirement age is sometimes higher than the number of jobs cut due to rationalisation. In these companies, qualification projects are being organised to recruit and qualify new target groups for employment in the graphic industry. Over the next few years, the need for labour is expected to increase once again as the economy picks up due to the exaggerated personnel cuts of past years.

In 1993, only around 600 young people started an initial dual vocational training period in the graphic industry. Around 4,000 trainees are currently involved in school-based vocational training. All in all, around 3,000 people are taking part in further training and education measures in the companies and at a central training centre in Veenendal (GOC). There is an overall trend towards labour market-oriented and workplace-oriented organisation of training.

Centrally coordinated labour market plans were introduced as an instrument for sectoral labour market planning in the 80s. Since 1992 five regional forums made up of representatives of the employers, the trade unions, the regional labour market administrations and the GOC have been drawing up regional labour market plans for the printing industry. The centrally negotiated labour market plan for 1993/96 stipulates basic guidelines and topic areas for the work of the five regional forums.

The negotiated labour market plans were merely enclosed as protocol appendices to the collective agreements and were not therefore binding. Although they stipulated numbers of apprenticeships, they did not stipulate further training and education measures. Experience with central and regional labour market plans brought the following problems to light: firstly, due to the emphasis on central coordination on sector level hardly any surveys were conducted into the further training and education needs in the companies[1]. In addition, it became clear that the individual companies did not feel bound by the target objectives approved by the employers' federation.

Parallel to this, the trade union has been able to gather experience with company-level agreements on employment plans since 1975, as these types of negotiations have already been conducted in the effort to master the crises in threatened companies. These company-level employment plans were more successful as regards the implementation of agreements than the procedure of central labour market planning. Moreover, they opened up options for the trade union to exercise an influence on company level. These experiences influenced both the reform ideas within the trade union as well as the subsequent collective negotiations on this central element in the MTV '94.

Finally, the MTV '94 should be seen as a reaction of employers and trade unions to the changed policy of the government. The latter is interested in passing on more responsibility for the organisation of labour market and employment policy to the employers and the trade unions. In other words, the MTV '94 not only supplements the former labour market and employment policy of employers and trade unions on the company level as well as expressing their traditionally partnership-oriented and sector-specific policy, but also shows that employers and trade unions are prepared to take on the responsibility which is being passed on to them.

3. How was this approach developed?

As already shown, the MTV '94 was a reaction to the specific problems in the Dutch printing industry. It should be stated, however, that the MTV '94 was concluded under highly unusual negotiating conditions.

There is no bargaining autonomy in the Netherlands. Under certain circumstances (for example, in time of crisis), the government has the right to intervene in the collective negotiations. There was a danger of this prior to the 1994 bargaining round. Due to the bleak economic situation in October 1993, the government demanded that the employers and trade unions should agree on a wage freeze. The umbrella organisations of both parties wanted to prevent the government from intervening in the negotiations and therefore accepted this demand. The traditionally partnership-oriented relations between employers and trade unions helped to avoid conflict during the wage negotiations. The employers were above all interested in stipulating a freeze on salaries and wages.

The trade union took this opportunity to press through their ideas on intra-company employment promotion vis-à-vis the employers' federation and to include trade union participation rights on company level in the collective agreement.

Moreover, a totally new collective agreement had been negotiated each year up to 1994; this was an extremely time-consuming process and complicated the implementation of these agreements in the companies. In 1993, the trade union demanded a three-year duration for collective agreements and the separation of collective agreements and wage agreements in order to thoroughly modernise the collective agreement. In cooperation with the GOC, all the vocational descriptions laid down in the collective agreement are now gradually being revised.[2]

4. Who is involved?

The MTV '94 and the instruments stipulated therein were negotiated by the trade union Druk en Papier in the FNV and the Federation of Employers in the Printing Industry. The company-level negotiations on an employment plan are conducted by a company-level negotiating committee, the composition of which is not laid down. This committee can be made up either of members of the employee councils, members of the workforce without formal offices, or representatives of the trade unions. The trade unions can be invited to assist and counsel the negotiating committee.

The trade union intends to use this new route of access to the individual companies to regain the influence they lost during the decline of the trade union shop steward structure. The full-time officials of the trade union are being trained for this new task within the framework of the "Campaign for Co-determination". A further aim of the trade union is to train the employee council members and the trade union representatives in the companies to participate in the new problem areas and fields of action. No training concepts have yet been drawn up for this purpose, however.

It is important to mention the extreme significance of the GOC Graphic Training Centre for vocational training in the Dutch printing industry as well as in the implementation of the MTV '94. The GOC develops the concepts for retraining and further training and education courses within the context of the intra-company social plans and monitors these training measures. It is the examining body for the decentral examinations and awards the nationally recognised certificates. The GOC is managed on an equal-representation basis and funded by the employers via a levy calculated on the basis of the total company payroll. Its duties are varied. It provides scientific accompaniment for vocational training courses, draws up papers on vocational and labour market research, and surveys the qualification needs in the printing industry on an annual basis. It also draws up and tests new didactic concepts for training and further training and education in the printing industry, particularly since the introduction of new technologies. It also offers its own further training and education and retraining courses and coordinates and monitors intra-company training and further training and education measures.

5. What resources and instruments are available?

The development of company-level survey instruments for the determination of training and further training and education needs in individual companies has not yet been completed by the trade unions. The intention is to both analyse the intra-company situation as well as assess the position of the respective individual company within the overall sector from the point of view of economic development, market development, competitive situation, technological development etc.

In order to measure the training and further training and education requirements among the workforce of individual companies, a so-called "inventory interview" is to be conducted with each employee in the company which details the individual qualification needs and, where applicable, the interest in further training and education.

To supplement these surveys, the trade union also carries out a central analysis of the economic and employment trends in the overall sector and passes this information on to the company-level negotiating committee together with recommendations.

The question as to the resources and instruments available for implementation of the MTV '94 cannot yet be definitively answered, as the procedure for negotiation and implementation of the employment plans is still in the initial stages of development.

6. What is the current assessment of the approach?

The provisions of the MTV '94 are still only just a few months old. After the negotiating committees have been set up and prepared for their task, the employment plans should be ready for implementation by the end of 1994, and we should have some idea of the initial results of - and experiences with - the new collective agreement.

The employers' federation is also actively supporting the efforts to implement the MTV '94. It is calling on its members to take an active part in company-level negotiations. Up to the present, there have been no real problems with regard to the invitation of the trade unions to take part in intra-company negotiations.

In its own assessment of the success of the negotiations leading up to the MTV '94, however, the Druk en Papier trade union realises that it would not have achieved the incorporation of intra-company organisational instruments such as training and employment plans in a collective agreement, had it not been for the current economic and technological changes in the printing industry and its approval of the wage freeze demand made by the government.

The trade union interprets the MTV '94 not just as a crisis-time instrument for the exercise of influence on company level, as initially conceded by the employers. It also intends to use the employment plan negotiations as an ongoing instrument. Its aim is to draw up and/or review the employment plans at yearly intervals.

Although the representatives of employee interests only enjoy consultation rights in the company-level negotiations, the trade union does not consider itself to be in a weak position vis-à-vis the employers, who - in the final analysis - make the personnel decisions and the decisions on training and further training and education. According to the way in which the trade union interprets the MTV '94, strikes are one method of achieving their goals if no agreement can be reached in the company-level negotiations.

A working group made up of full-time employees of the Druk en Papier trade union and which meets monthly is currently conducting parallel evaluation/exchange of information on the implementation of the MTV '94.

The trade union believes that experiences with central and regional labour market planning to date already indicate some of the problems relating to implementation of the new collective agreement. There is frequently a resistance to retraining measures, particularly among the older employees. A further problem might arise from the fact that the MTV '94 has given the employment policy of the Dutch employers and trade unions a second, company-based dimension alongside the central/regional labour market planning concept. Although these two instruments overlap, they might well also prove to be a hindrance to one another.

On the whole, the MTV '94 is seen as a logical further development of the previous sectoral policy, which has now been extended by strengthening the influence of the trade unions in the company-level field of action.

7. What is the status of this approach within the context of trade union further training and education policy?

The MTV '94 is not primarily a collective agreement on further training and education, but rather an agreement on the safeguarding of jobs. It calls upon the parties to conduct negotiations in each individual company but does not stipulate a range of topics for negotiation. The only common denominator of negotiating topics is their effect on and contribution to the objective of safeguarding jobs. According to the trade union, the field of training and further training and education has an important role to play in this regard. The relative "weighting" of the various topics can and will change depending on changes in technology, work organisation and the economy.

The company-level employment plan instrument is only one of several measures geared towards overcoming intra-company modernisation processes within the context of the labour market policy of employers and trade union. There are also further ideas for a joint employment policy of trade union and employers - such as a jointly managed fund in the offset printing sector which would help companies to avoid investment in large-scale technological innovations and enable them to invest the money in intra-company further training and education and retraining measures in the attempt to solve social problems. As of July 1994, the employers' federation has approved these measures on the condition that the trade union contributes 50% of the funding (500.000 Gilder). This idea still has to be discussed with the union members.

The MTV '94 is of great significance within the overall framework of trade union policy, as, in addition to promoting employment, it is also geared towards extending trade union influence at company level. The "Campaign for Co-determination" clearly indicates the objectives of the trade union.

As a result of the policy of the Dutch government, which is passing on more and more responsibility for social and labour market policy to the employers and trade unions, the activities of the trade unions in these policy fields is becoming increasingly important. The Druk en Papier trade union and its umbrella organisation (the FNV - Dutch Confederation of Trade Unions) are taking this opportunity to extend their own influence in the field of social policy.

8. What stimuli does the approach provide for a transfer of experience?

The provisions of the MTV '94 in the printing industry by no means constitute an isolated trend in the Netherlands. Similar debates are in progress in other trade unions as well as in the FNV. Nevertheless, the provisions in the collective agreement for the graphic industry represent a new approach within the context of Dutch sectoral policy which increases the direct company-level influence of employee councils as well as of the trade union, insofar as the latter is invited to participate by the negotiating committee. The agreement reached by the Druk en Papier therefore plays a pioneering role in the Netherlands.

Druk en Papier believes that the provisions of the MTV '94 van be transferred to other sectors of Dutch industry. The trade union believes that a traditional partnership-oriented system of industrial relations is one of the central preconditions for the transfer of these provisions.

The trade union believes that this approach might be suitable for transfer to Switzerland, Austria and Denmark. In view of the more conflict-laden relations between employers and trade unions, however, it sees problems in the transfer of this approach to Germany, Belgium, France and Great Britain. According to the trade union, a further important aspect in the realisation of this new approach is that the Dutch graphic industry still operates a closed shop system which is incorporated in the collective agreement. This system binds the employees and employers to their respective federations, and generally ensures that negotiating muscle and membership discipline remain high.

The further development of trade union sectoral policy negotiated by Druk en Papier in the MTV '94 should also be seen as a reaction to the co-determination situation in the Netherlands. This type of collective agreement-based guarantee of information and participation rights for the trade union, its officials and the elected representatives in the area of further training and education would appear to be transferable to other countries in the EU in which no statutory co-determination rights exist.

In the Netherlands, the trade unions have to negotiate the basic regulations for the work of their (company-based) officials in collective agreements on sectoral level.3

Through the extension of participation rights on company level, the MTV '94 provides the Dutch sectoral policy of the graphic industry with a second dimension alongside sectoral negotiations and labour market planning. This collective agreement constitutes a further development of trade union sectoral policy and appears suitable for transfer to countries in which a sector-related policy already exists. Collective agreement-based provisions on sectoral level are of particular importance wherever trade unions either lack the power to press through nationally stipulated co-determination rights, or where the government passes on responsibility for the negotiation of regulatory powers to employers and trade unions without intervening in the process by introducing its own legislation.

The provisions of the MTV '94 were developed against the backdrop of a tradition of tripartite cooperative structures in the Netherlands and are based on fundamental partnership-oriented consensus in the field of industrial relations. The Dutch tradition of cooperative and partnership-oriented industrial relations was documented back in 1977 with the creation of the GOC, which plays a decisive role in the implementation of the new approach outlined in the MTV '94.

In view of its objective of partially reconciling the needs of economic modernisation and social protection, the MTV '94 can be seen as an approach which succeeds in linking these two elements. On the one hand, the trade union and the employee representatives assume part of the responsibility for intra-company modernisation by participating in the drawing up of a company-level employment plan and therefore contributing towards the "modernisation" of the company workforce. At the same time, they are making use of their influence within the context of this "modernisation package" to extend the social protection of the workforce by pushing for further training and education instead of dismissals as well as long-term plans geared towards changing the intra-company employment and qualification structure. On sectoral level, they exercise influence on labour market planning with the aim of providing jobs for as many unemployed people as possible and promoting further training and education and retraining measures.

One of the great strengths of this problem-solving approach is the development of a range of instruments for the determination of needs and the planning of corresponding measures on sectoral and company level, coupled with the fact that trade unions and employee representatives are playing an active part on both levels. There are, however, important limitations which also define this collective agreement-based right, in that there is no legal obligation to reach agreement in the intra-company negotiations on an employment plan.

It is expressly stated in the MTV '94 that the management remains responsible for all decisions connected with personnel levels and personnel make-up. There is therefore no genuine right of co-determination but merely a right of participation.

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Chapter 2

Examples for fields of action and levels of action for trade union further training and education policy

2.7

Level of action: further training and education as a system

Example: The food and beverage industry in Spain

The food and beverage industry in Spain

1. What are the characteristic features of this approach?

The example from Spain shows the implementation of a national agreement on further training and education on sectoral level. The example in question is an agreement between the employers' federation (FIAB) and the trade unions (UGT and CC.OO but not ELA-STV) in the food and beverage industry in Spain on the organisation of further training and education for employees which was concluded in March 1993.

The focal point of the agreement is the consensus on the obligation on the part of employers and trade unions to develop further training and education plans for the workforce either within individual companies or for groups of several companies. The further training and education measures are organised and funded by a joint foundation at national level. This agreement on sectoral level is therefore closely linked to the national agreement on further training and education which we will look at in more detail when describing its history and development (section 3).

2. What problems does the approach address?

This sectoral agreement is the outcome of two national agreements concluded at the end of 1992 - a) between the Spanish government, the trade unions and the employers and b) between the trade unions and the employers' federations on the further training and education of employees (see further below). It is also a reaction to the necessity which both the unions and employers' federations in the sector have long recognised to train both the employees and the employers in the sector. The reasons behind this urgent need and the basic features of this sector in Spain are portrayed in the introduction to the agreement as follows:

> *"The special features of the food and beverage sector render the strategic importance of vocational training even more evident: the low number of small and medium-sized companies (only 2.5% of the companies in the sector have more than 50 employees), the seasonal nature of many of the industrial activities in the sector, the current extreme paucity of vocational basic and further training for the sector, and the low average qualification levels of the employees."*

One important stimulus for the implementation of further training and education for employees is without doubt the fact that the influence of the European

Union is making problems such as hygiene, quality and environmental protection increasingly important as competitive factors.

With regard to company size and other features, there are considerable differences between the sub-sectors of the food and beverage industry, and the sector must therefore be seen as an "atomised" sector. It is this very problem that makes the biggest demands on the implementation of the further training and education agreement in this sector.

The five biggest companies in the sector command 11 % of total market sales, and the 50 biggest companies control 40 % of the market. Big companies are mainly found in the sub-sectors tobacco, beer and sugar, whilst the average size of companies in the oil, bakery, ground products and wine sub-sectors is extremely small. The small companies in this sector in particular are often family businesses, and most of the employees are members of the family.

32 % of the employees in the sector are women (compared to 25 % in Spanish industry overall). Only 14 % of the employees in the sector possess a qualification which is equivalent to or better than a standard vocational diploma. 12 % of employees have never completed a training course.

3. How was this approach developed?

For several years now, the unions on sectoral level have been making major efforts to achieve far-reaching improvements in the vocational qualification of employees. The UGT Alimentaciòn y Bebida, for example, operates its own vocational training centre, and the responsible secretariat of the union executive has geared its efforts towards tackling this problem for a number of years. Due to the highly centralised negotiating policy of employers and trade unions, an agreement on national level which developed further training and education in Spain as a third component of the education system was needed to achieve tangible improvement on sectoral level, particularly since the funding provisions were dependent on central government decisions. The breakthrough came at the end of 1992 with the signing of the Acuerdo Nacional de Formación Continua (national agreement on further training and education), which created a general framework for the raising of further training and education to the status of a central negotiating object at sectoral level.

This overall agreement was only finalised after time-consuming negotiations. It consists of two agreements: the "Acuerdo Tripartito en materia de Formación Continua de los Trabajadores Ocupados" - signed by the Spanish government, the employer organisations CEOE and CEPYME and the trade unions UGT and CC.OO - and a bilateral agreement between the employer organisations and the trade unions. This national agreement on further training and education is the preliminary outcome of a series of initiatives geared towards making a new system of vocational training available to the employees and employers which is based on social consensus and the direct responsibility of trade unions and employers with regard to implementation.

The agreement, which came into effect on January 1st 1993, will initially run until December 1996.

This agreement formally declares that the funding, organisation and implementation of vocational further training and education are mainly the responsibility of employers and trade unions. The preamble to the agreement states, among other things:

> *"Vocational further training and education of employees generally lies within the area of responsibility of the employers and employees, and they - or their legal representatives - are responsible for the organisation, management and implementation of further training and education. The necessary equal-representation bodies need to be set up for this purpose."*

4. Who is involved?

Whilst the role of the Ministry for Labour and Social Security is to provide support and orientation, the trade unions and employers in the food and beverage industry are directly responsible for the joint organisation and implementation of vocational further training and education. The "actors" in the food and beverage industry have adhered to all the stipulations on procedure laid down in the national agreement on further training and education. The first two listed commissions created in line with the national agreement on further training and education are therefore also central control bodies for the sectoral policy within the framework of further training and education.

The following bodies have been set up for the purpose of implementing the agreement:

- the Comisión Tripartita de Sequimento, a commission made up of representatives of the state, the employers and the trade unions, whose job is to monitor the develop of further training and education;

- Comisión Mixta Estatal de Formación Continiua, an equal-representation commission made up of eight representatives each of the employer federations and trade unions. This body plays a key role in the new system of vocational further training and education, and

- corresponding equal-representation commissions on sectoral level with regional and sub-sectoral sub-structures (Comisión paritaria sectorial).

The equal-representation commission on sectoral level draws up the criteria for development of the further training and education plans, lays down priorities for further training and education activities, and compiles a list of suitable further training and education institutions for the sector. Moreover, the further training and education plans for the sector are forwarded to the national state commission via this commission and funding organised via a foundation.

The employers' federations and trade unions who are party to the agreement have set up a further training and education foundation (Fundación para la Formación Continua - FORCEM) for the technical organisation and the management of the further training and education system. The council of the foundation is practically identical with the Comisión Mixta Estatal and is chaired in yearly rotation by representatives of the employers and the trade unions. The council sets up a smaller permanent council for operative purposes.

5. What resources and instruments are available?

Vocational further training and education measures are only funded after further training and education plans have been submitted and approved. The agreement makes provision for the following kinds of further training and education plans:

- Company plans

Companies with more than 200 employees may submit their own further training and education plans. These plans should be valid for one year and contain information on goals and contents, target groups, implementation schedule, a detailed cost schedule, the required technical equipment and media, and the location for the training measures.

There is an obligation on the companies to provide information to the legal representatives of the employees; agreement must be reached on the contents of the plan, and this agreement must be expressed in the form of countersigning of the plans by the representatives of the employees. In the event that there are differences of opinion, the responsible commission can be called in to mediate.

- *Group plans*

These are plans submitted by companies who join together for the purpose of providing further training and education and who represent a total of at least 200 employees. Large companies can also participate in these group plans, although this instrument is mainly geared towards enabling smaller companies - and the overwhelming majority of companies in Spain are small companies - to become active in the field of further training and education. These plans can be developed at the suggestion of the employers' federations or the trade unions; these two can also organise the further training and education measures or commission other external institutes to do so. The requirements with regard to the provision of information are the same as in the first case, with the difference that the approval of the employee representatives from all the participating companies is not an express requirement; this follows from the fact that many small companies do not have employee representatives.

- *Other further training and education plans*

There are also inter-sectoral further training and education plans geared towards specific occupational profiles which exist in different sectors and where the same further training measures are feasible and appropriate. The initiative for these further training and education plans can come from the employers and trade unions.

- *Further training and education for individuals*

This is the component of the agreement which has posed the most difficult problems for employers and trade unions. This element is based on Agreement 140 of the International Labour Organisation dating back to the year 1977.

This agreement provides all employees who have worked in a certain sector for at least one year and who have been with their companies for at least six months with the right to 150 hours worth of leave for vocational further training and education outside the company. During this time, the employee receives financial support equivalent to the average wage laid down in the collective agreement. Employees may only take part in vocational further training and education courses which lead to a recognised qualification. The individual employee must apply to the company for leave and must also inform the employee representative.

The vocational further training and education measures for employees are funded from the Quota de Formación Profesional (the vocational training charge levied together with social security contributions). The agreement stipulated that 0.1% out of the 0.7% levy was to be spent on vocational further training and education of employees in 1993, and this figure is to rise to 0.4% by 1996 (it is estimated that this 0.1% raises a total 20 million Pesetas).

6. What is the current assessment of this approach?

The experience gained during the first year of the agreement shows that the two parties (trade unions and employers) are finding it very difficult to operate in the unaccustomed field of compiling and agreeing on further training and education plans, with the result that the above sum was by no means fully spent due to a lack of applications for further training and education.

In a sector with a company size structure like the Spanish food and beverage industry, it is especially important to ensure that group plans also incorporate the very small companies. This year, therefore, the activities of the regional training officers of the Federación de Alimentación y Tabacos of the UGT are concentrated on the initiation of these group plans - with increasing, but still unsatisfactory, success, as they still face considerable problems:

- there is often fierce local competition between the small companies;
- the high number of small businesses in the craft/trades sector who are often not particularly interested in training measures;
- small workforces with low qualification levels who have no independent vehicle for the articulation of their interests and who have little or no trade union tradition.

In the implementation of the agreement in the food and beverage industry, the trade unions (and the employers' federations) encounter difficulties connected with the special features of this sector. Whilst the unions have succeeded in reaching widespread agreement on questions of further training and education at federation level, there are barriers on company level both among individual employers and among the employees themselves.

7. What ist the status of this approach within the context of trade union further training and education policy?

The activities geared towards implementation of the agreement on further training and education meanwhile play an important role within overall trade union policy. This is also reflected in the participation of the corresponding trade unions in transnational FORCE projects.

The overall aim is to incorporate the topic of further training and education in all collective agreements. In addition to the conviction that it is necessary to greatly improve qualification levels in Spain, a further important factor from the point of view of the trade unions is that the agreement allows the unions to themselves offer further training and education courses as an important "service" as well as to promote the implementation of such courses. This is seen as an opportunity to become involved in areas of employment (such as small and medium-sized companies) in which trade unions have previously had little or no influence.

At the same time, the conclusion of the agreement and its subsequent implementation has changed the nature of cooperation between trade unions and employers in the sector: the necessity to make joint decisions and the common interest in obtaining maximum financial assistance from the national foundation (FOREM) has not been without its effects on the traditionally conflict-based industrial relations in the sector. This has in turn necessitated changes to the internal trade union structure, and the UGT believes that these changes will also exercise an influence on other areas of negotiation with the employers.

One consequence of the agreement is that the trade union representatives on all levels have had to learn to negotiate on further training and education and on the organisation of further training and education plans. In order to promote this process, the UGT has developed a manual at national level which explains the criteria for negotiations from the point of view of the employees as well as the instruments at their disposal. Together with a special leaflet developed by the Federación de Alimentatión y Bebidas, this manual formed the basis for training courses for the trade unionists who will be conducting regional and company negotiations on further training and education and helping to organise further training and education programmes.

The implementation of the further training and education agreement therefore means that trade union activities will be extended to include the company-based employee representatives and also opens up the way for the reorganisation of industrial relations and the development of these relations to cover areas other than further training and education.

8. What stimuli does the approach provide for a transfer of experience?

The characteristic feature of the "new" Spanish system of vocational further training and education is its incorporation in the procedures of collective agreements and negotiations - this applies both to the material aspects of further training and education and to the target groups, contents and structures involved. It is important to emphasise once again that further training and education measures are co-financed by the employees, and this increases the legitimacy and acceptance of participation of trade unions and company-based employee representatives in this process.

In 1996, the experiences made with this agreement will have to be assessed - also with regard to increasing the part of the levy used for further training and education and examining the funding parts played by the employers and the employees. In the run-up to the 1992 agreement, there were considerable differences of opinion between the employers' federations and the trade unions.

Through the overall initiative for the *creation of a system of vocational further training and education* of employees, it is hoped and expected that the companies will put a great deal more effort into the further training and education of their employees. As was shown by a survey into labour costs conducted by the National Statistics Institute for the year 1988, Spanish companies spent only an average 3,600 Pesetas per year on the vocational training of each employee - this is equivalent to 0.16% of the gross labour costs. On average, the bigger companies spent more than the smaller companies.

The example of the food and beverage industry in Spain shows clearly that general national agreements are essential to the implementation of a specific sectoral policy. Without the national agreement there would probably have been no sectoral agreement. The fact that the funding system is generally regulated - and not just on a sector-specific level - greatly facilitated the negotiations between the employers and the trade unions. It meant that the implementation of further training and education programmes depends not only on the economic situation within the sector but on the national economic situation overall.

Under these conditions - the creation of a state-wide framework on the basis of a national agreement, sector-independent funding - the Spanish model is only suitable for other countries to a limited degree. It represents a policy geared towards developing *further training and education as a relatively general system* as well as a specific sectoral policy within this overall framework.

In terms of the sectoral approach, however, the agreement in the Spanish food and beverage industry has certain elements which are certainly suitable for transfer. The existing group plans for the food and beverage industry open up particular options for transferral to sectors made up of many sub-sectors and possessing a predominantly small and medium-sized company structure, as the group plans have been developed for cooperation in various kinds of small company. This development also offers the trade unions an opportunity to generate new spheres of influence.

In view of the limited time frame for implementation, it remains to be seen whether the implementation of this agreement is in fact successful - and whether it will lead to substantial improvements in the qualification levels in the Spanish food and beverage industry.

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Chapter 2

Concluding remarks:

Transfer as a social process

Transfer as a social process

Reflections on the utilisation of case examples within the context of European cooperation and outlook for future measures

This project began - accompanied by several discussions among the European trade union experts on further training and education - with the description of the various national trade union policies on further training and education against the backdrop of changing industrial relations. It led to the definition of important current and future fields of action and to the description of examples for problem-solving approaches from different member states of the EU. These examples have been outlined in the preceding products. The descriptions all have the same layout, which is designed to explain to interested parties the problem definition, the social context and some of the important operative aspects.

Case studies on further training and education have become an important methodological approach within the framework of the studies conducted within the European promotion programme FORCE: this approach forms the basis for the various sector studies as well as for the practical manual for further training and education in the retail sector soon to be published by CEDEFOP. The catalogue of promotion instruments for the European social dialogue on further training and education - completed in the autumn of 1994 and presented and discussed at a European conference in Brussels - is also based on this approach.

It is assumed that the concrete nature of the examples and their obvious relevance to real situations can provide more useful stimuli than the mere formulation of general principles and insights. This is without doubt the correct stance: the conditions that are described actually exist - yet the quality of the information depends on the quality of research and the quality of presentation. As it is difficult or impossible to dispute that these approaches and solutions actually exist, this often leads to the "penny dropping" effect: problems which some parties consider to be nigh insoluble are already being tackled elsewhere in an innovative manner.

This aspect of the project was impressively reflected by the discussions at a first seminar on the transfer of experience in October 1994 in Düsseldorf involving German trade unionists and further training and education experts. In the member states of the European Union, reference to a "solution" found or negotiated in another European country is obviously increasingly being used as an argument to break negotiating deadlocks. This applies in particular to all aspects relating to the "social dialogue" - in other words, the various forms of and approaches to cooperation between the trade unions and the employers' federations. There is obviously a great interest in setting discussions in motion in a particular country by pointing to developments in other countries or on European level. There are meanwhile many examples in Europe for the success of this strategy: the reform of the Spanish vocational training system is largely the result of a wide range of "inputs" from the European debate as well as of the "experience transfers" from various European countries organised from Spain during some of the decisive phases of reform. The trade unions played an important role in this process.

All discussions to date on case examples between those involved in further training and education - irrespective of whether the individuals concerned are from the companies of from the organisations of the employers or trade unions - show that the most important precondition for using ideas from a specific "case" - its problem-solving approach, the way in which it defines and tackles the problem - is that the *problem definition* in question is shared; and not only shared in an abstract sense (i.e. "something really needs to be done in this field") but in a concrete sense in line with an *existing urgency and need for action.* Although this connection seems logical, it is often forgotten. The pilot and qualification projects of the FORCE programme provide a wide range of examples which support the existence of this connection: the relevant parties only start to talk to each other where a shared problem definition prompts a need for action.

The "need for action" is, however, anything but an objective condition; the need for action depends on interpretations and, subsequently, on negotiations between the various parties. The steps which have to be taken when there is a need for action are derived from the strategic interpretation of one's own situation and depend on whether those involved in the definition of the need for action can be convinced of this need.

Needs for action in the field of further training and education are therefore based on specific problem constellations relating to the deployment of labour within the company, traditional priorities in the policy of the trade unions and employers' federations, economic and legal contexts, the development of industrial relations, and processes within society connected with instilling an awareness for problems. This can be clearly seen from the examples for the promotion of women's interests and environmental protection.

The truly implementation-oriented "experience transfers" between trade unions are far more difficult and complex than those between two or three companies engaged in the development of concepts for joint projects in the area of company-based further training and education. For transfer takes place within the framework of internal processes of strategy development in large-scale, democratically structured organisations which, for their part, are integrated in specific programmatic and socio-cultural traditions of industrial relations. The findings of our country-specific studies show that the prospects for innovation and therefore the options for the transfer of experiences are greater wherever industrial relations are undergoing a process of change. The transfer of problem-solving approaches between trade unions in the field of vocational further training and education differs from the process of transfer between companies in that the problem is not so much one of a direct transfer or of practical application but has more to do with the acceptance of "translated" problem solutions from other countries into the system of reform proposals, demands, and negotiating issues geared towards improvement in the area of company-based further training and education. The possibility of the transfer of problem-solving elements from other countries is always associated with programmatic reformulation. The task therefore is to integrate these examples in the context of previous and future trade union further training and education policy against the background of the respective labour and education systems. The connections between education, wage and organisational policy are of particular importance in this respect. The necessary information an only be "processed" in a successful and profitable manner if this process is accompanied by reflection on the recipient's own strategy.

Only when the problem definition is also seen, experienced or accepted by others as a need for action is it possible to develop a serious interest in the special aspects of the solution as presented in the case example. A case description, initially based on a specific socio-cultural context, initially has only an indicative character - in other words, it points to a specific problem which has been tackled in a specific way with a specific result. The scope of the example description and the degree in which the example is detailed are irrelevant for the time being.

The frequently voiced demand that the case descriptions should be extended further, that more context information should be provided etc., ignores the fact that the authors cannot know with any degree of certainty what aspects the potential users are really interested in. For although the layout of the cases ensures that important *information* is given to enable the reader to correctly understand the described approach or problem-solving concept, the fundamental problem of transfer still remains. The reader and potential user of the information follows his or her own "code" expressing his or her own framework of and priority for action. A general demand for increased information content is of very little use, as each individual has different information requirements based on his or her own specific framework of and options for action.

However detailed a case description may be, it can still be incomplete from the point of view of the individual user. This also applies to our case descriptions, although we conducted wide-ranging discussions and research among the member organisations of the ETUC before developing differentiated ideas about the special characteristics of the further training and education policies of the trade unions in the member states of the EU and using these ideas as the basis for selection of the cases in the various fields of action.

How can we address the problem of the incomplete nature of the information from the point of view of the potential user, a problem which may vary from country to country and even from one trade union organisation to another? The experiences gained in the European discussion to date show that *transfer* (of experience and approaches) is a *social process* - a process of communication between those who have produced a specific problem solution and those who "share" the problem definition and then want to know more about the specific problem-solving conditions, yet always on the basis of and in comparison with their own conditions and circumstances.

It is the process of comparison - based on the formulation of own questions based on own priorities and conditions for action - that makes the case studies highly promising "transfer objects". Only when this type of perspective has been developed is it possible to specify the additional information needs more precisely.

In order to support the social process of transfer of experiences, approaches and problem-solving concepts, it is therefore important to develop a instrument alongside the case descriptions which allows a comparison with the reader's own situation. What is therefore needed is a *methodological guideline for the utilisation of examples in the field of further training and education from other socio-cultural contexts.*

How can we develop this kind of guideline? The only way this would appear to be possible is by talking in detail to trade unionists from a particular country about the possible significance of examples from other countries for their own policies. The case examples would then also serve as a "probe" to determine the interviewee's own framework for action, which could then be analysed on a comparative basis. The following questions could form a rough guide for this type of guideline:

- To what extent are the trade unions interested in a discussion about specific examples from the social dialogue on further training and education from other countries?
- Are the examples easy to understand?
- What information is needed on the political, economic, social and cultural context, and why?

- How would the case example look in the interviewee's own context?
- Are there similarities or points of contact which might be of significance for a European trade union policy on further training and education?

However, this question framework is still too rough and insufficiently substantiated from a methodological point of view. Exact recording of the information on transfer problems and transfer options arising from these discussions - always seen against the background of the interviewee's own situation - and on the requests for further specific information formulated during this process would allow initial description of the way in which case examples from other countries could be used.

Three to four discussions of this type in different member states of the EU which vary in terms of tradition, structures and cultures would enable us to develop a methodological instrument which could provide general assistance for the transnational "processing" of case examples. This important additional step, which would also improve the process of transfer between the trade unions in Europe, has been a conceptual part of this project from the very beginning. The cases were selected with the intention of subsequently "feeding" them into a systematic transnational process of discussion on the conditions for transferability. The implementation of this concept for the development of a methodological instrument has, however, not been possible within the time/subject frame of this project.

It is important to emphasise, however, that this type of instrument can never replace direct communication between those who have developed a specific approach and those who see this approach as important and interesting. On the contrary: the systematic creation of contacts and direct communication are the preconditions for the effective transfer of experiences and ideas. However, case examples and the provision of a methodological instrument for working with case examples can effectively promote closer cooperation and communication between the trade unions in Europe in the field of further training and education; the development of a system of more intensive, application-oriented communication and cooperation is the only way in which the European dimension can be promoted alongside the specific national, sectoral or company-specific perspectives.

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Chapter 3

Information dossiers on twelve EU-Member States and the European level

Chapter 3 *by Winfried Heidemann, Wilfried Kruse, Angela Paul-Kohlhoff, Christine Zeuner, "Social Dialogue and Further Education and Training in Europe - New Challenges for the Trade Unions", Berlin: Ed. Sigma, 1994 - ISBN 3-89404-385-7*

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Chapter 4

Information dossiers on three new EU member states

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Chapter 4

Information dossiers on three new EU member states

4.1

Austria

1. Initial situation

The structure of the Austrian economy shows the classic shift away from agriculture and towards services. The percentage of those employed in agriculture and forestry is constantly on the decline, although the decrease has become more gradual in recent years. The economic situation in Austria is mainly characterised by three factors:

1. The serious involvement of the public sector in a number of areas of the economy (although intensive efforts have been made for some time now to privatise public-sector industries);
2. The dominance of big foreign corporations, particularly in the consumer and capital goods sectors as well as in the field of international services;
3. Relatively low expenditure on research and development compared to other European countries.

It is estimated that more than one third of economic output is generated by foreign capital deployed by big multinational corporations and service companies, particularly by companies from Germany, a third by small and medium-sized Austrian companies, and slightly less than a third by the public-sector economy (sectors: steel, metal, oil, electricity, banking, the media).

The Austrian economy is predominantly organised in small and medium-sized companies, and tourism is one of the important - and still expanding - sectors.

The training structure of the country's working population according to sectors shows the shift towards higher qualifications observed in other industrialised countries. Whereas in 1971 only 3.1% of the working population possessed a university degree, this figure had risen to 6.8% by 1989. Nevertheless, the percentage of academics is still relatively low compared to other countries. In spite of major efforts in the field of training over the last 20 years, there is still a widespread need for further training.

The unemployment rate increased from 1.9% in 1980 to over 6% in 1992. It is mainly the less well-qualified employees who are affected by unemployment. This group of people remains unemployed considerably longer than other groups. As a result, the topic of vocational further training has become increasingly important in Austria in recent years in connection with the country's labour market policy.

2. Development of industrial relations and their significance for further training policy

The Austrian trade union federation (the ÖGB) was founded in 1945, directly after the end of the Second World War, as a unified federation for all employees. The single-industry trade unions were subsequently (re-)founded under the embrella of this unified federation. This development also explains the relatively strong centralist orientation of the Austrian trade unions.

In contrast to the situation in Germany, for example, the 14 member unions of the ÖGB are not solely organised according to industry (sector-specific trade unions - one company / one trade union): alongside the sector-specific division, there is also a division between white-collar and blue-collar employees. In addition to the eight sectoral trade unions for blue-collar employees and a cross-sector union for white-collar employees, there are also four trade unions for employees in the public sector, the post office and the railways and one trade union for blue- and white-collar employees in the media. This differentiated organisational concept means that there are no other trade unions beside those in the ÖGB, and this is a unique situation throughout Europe.

The central role played by the ÖGB has important implications for three central areas of trade union organisation: financing, the general personnel policy of the trade unions and the role of the ÖGB as a negotiating partner with employer federations and the state, provincial and regional governments.

The ÖGB is responsible for the formulation of general employee interests, while the individual unions deal with specific issues affecting the employees in the various trade union sectors. The ÖGB formulates the long-term goals of the trade unions and represents the unions vis-à-vis the state and the central employer federations. The collective agreements are concluded by the individual trade unions; but the unions do not act fully autonomously but within the framework of the central "Parity-based Commission" - an institution of employers and unions which is specific to the Austrian system of industrial relations where the ÖGB submits motions for the initiation of negotiations.

The unionisation level of the ÖGB is relatively high compared to other European countries. In 1989, 57.5% of all employees were union members. There are, however, significant differences between membership levels of men and women as well as, in certain sectors, a declining willingness among younger employees to join a trade union.

The trade unions are heavily involved in the area of further training policy in Austria, mainly due to the fact that parity-based participation in this field is provided for in various areas. First of all, there is the important "Labour Market Service" (AMS) which is geared towards fundamental reforms of the

Austrian labour market administration (AMV) and which came into effect in April 1994. Within the context of the AMS system, trade unions and employers play an important role in the formation of opinion on all levels (federal, provincial and regional). The incorporation of employers and trade unions in the work of the AMS means that they have a say in all further training and retraining measures implemented within the context of labour market policy.

The considerable influence of the trade unions on the organisation and implementation of further training activities stems from the central importance of the vocational promotion institutes - vocational adult training centres sponsored by the ÖGB and the "employee chambers" (chambers for blue- and white-collar employees). The employee chambers were set up immediately after the Second World War as a counter-weight to the chambers of industry and reflect the policy of "harmonised" social action in Austria. All employees are compulsory members in these chambers, which have the statutory duty to represent the interests of the employees and which cooperate closely with the ÖGB. The vocational promotion institutes and the economic promotion institutes of the chambers of commerce make the biggest contribution in the area of vocational further training. One example is a joint project of the employee chambers, the vocational promotion institutes and the ÖGB in Vienna which is specially designed to train employee council members to make the most of their options for the exercise of intra-company influence in the area of further training.

In addition, the participation of the trade unions in the "employment foundations" also plays an important role in the further training sector in Austria as an instrument for cushioning the effects of redundancies caused by structural adjustment in certain regions.

The inclusion of further training entitlements in collective agreements is an important goal of the ÖGB and its member unions. Up to the present, however, they have seldom been able to achieve any kind of breakthrough in their negotiations with the employer federations.

On company level, the powers of the employee councils is governed by the Employment Constitution Act. Employee councils are elected in all companies with more than 5 employees. Art. 94 of the Employment Constitution Act outlines the rights of the employee council in the area of training as follows:

- Information on planned (further) training measures;
- Participation in the planning and implementation of intra-company vocational training as well as intra-company training and re-training measures;
- Participation in negotiations between management and the offices of the Labour Market Service;

- Participation in the administration of company training institutions;
- Submission of recommendations on training measures to the company management and the right to demand consultation on such measures.

Although the basic initiative for the implementation of further training measures remains with the company management, the employee councils do have a relatively extensive say in the de facto organisation of such measures. It should, however, be taken into account that the Austrian economy is predominantly characterised by small and medium-sized companies and that, as a result, the influence of employee councils in the area of further training is relative limited.

One of the central objectives of the ÖGB and the employee councils in the individual companies is to make "training release" a statutory entitlement for all employees. It is interesting to note that the Austrian trade unions do not use the term "training leave", as they consider that the word "leave" places a question mark over the balance between work and learning.

3. Developments in the field of further training

Vocational further training in Austria is not regulated by law. In contrast to the situation in Germany, the Vocational Training Act (BAG) only governs the field of initial vocational training, and none of the nine Austrian provinces has any laws on training leave. The only people who are entitled to training release are members of employee councils in line with the Industrial Constitution Act. For some time now, the trade unions in Austria have been demanding the introduction of training leave for employees as well as the regulation of intra-company further training measures in collective agreements.

In the field of vocational further training, there is market competition between a wide range of private providers. Private further training institutes such as the economic promotion institutes of the chambers of industry, the vocational promotion institutes of the employee chambers or the agricultural further training institutes organise training and further training measures in Austria in close cooperation with the companies. They organise the major part of vocational further training measures in Austria. The private providers of further training have joined forces to form a Conference on Adult Training in Austria (the so-called KEBÖ) with the aim of joint representation of recommendations in the field of further training vis-à-vis the responsible Ministries. This organisation also includes private providers of further training who run state-approved training centres for employees.

Alongside these private providers of further training, there are also further training courses for employees organised by state bodies in the Austrian schools and colleges. These bodies offer the following kinds of further training:

- Measures leading to university entrance qualifications (equivalent to "A" Levels);
- Measures at intermediate-level vocational training colleges leading to a vocational qualification;
- Colleges for master tradesmen and construction employees. The work of these colleges has two objectives: the attainment of the qualification of master tradesman through further training and the achievement of university entrance qualifications through appropriate general education measures.

The master tradesmen's colleges for employees run by the representative bodies of the employees and employers in line with state curriculums exist in all parts of Austria.

These colleges prepare participants for the master tradesmen's examination, which is not staged by the colleges but by a commission of the respective guild.

With the exception of the master tradesmen's colleges, the further training measures offered at state schools and colleges are mainly aimed at employees who want to attain further training qualifications parallel to their work or who want to combine the improvement of existing vocational qualifications with the attainment of a university entrance qualification. The well-established network of vocational colleges for employees which offer courses leading to vocational diplomas, "A" Level standard qualifications or special vocational qualifications is one of the most important features of the Austrian training system.

The courses offered by the private providers, on the other hand, mainly lead to a wide range of diplomas catering to contemporary vocation-related qualification needs. Contributions amounting to approx. 20-50% of the course costs have to be paid. The remainder is often paid by those sending the employees to courses - in other words, those who make the arrangements for further training or have an interest in such courses (trade unions or companies, for example).

More recently, the further training institutions of the chambers of commerce have set up specialised academies offering further training courses to skilled workers geared towards current qualification needs. These academies organise courses in such areas as the environmental sciences and automation/process technology and have deliberately foregone the option of state recognition. As the course fees are extremely high, however, these academies have no broadly based influence to date.

As in all European countries, the percentage of intra-company further training courses is on the increase. Due to the small-sized structure of the Austrian economy, however, this increase is neither systematic nor uniform. The proportion of further training measures organised by the big multinational corporations in Austria is far higher. There is also a trend in Austria towards the provision of intra-company training courses for employees who are already relatively well qualified accompanied by a severe lack of intra-company measures for "normal" skilled workers and the semi-skilled/unskilled.

The field of further training is of particular importance with regard to the restructuring process in Austrian industry. In line with the German model, for example, the VOEST-Alpine steel foundation was set up in 1987 for those made redundant during the steel crisis and was funded by "solidarity contributions" from those still in employment, as well as contributions from companies and from the statutory unemployment insurance system. Similar schemes were started up in regions with declining raw material industries in the Steiermark province, in the Ampflwang coal-mining region or in the ailing craft sectors of the typographic and printing industry. From the point of view of the trade unions, these foundations provide an important means of overcoming structural change, and it is significant that they are supported by the state, the employees and the companies. The foundations perform four central functions for employees made redundant during the course of restructuring measures: outplacement (orientation phase prior to transfer to another workplace), training, job creation, and intensive counselling and support for older employees. These foundations are funded by monies from labour market policy schemes (the AMS/AMV mentioned above), the companies who make employees redundant, and employees, who pay 1% of their gross income into the foundations over a period of three years. The trade unions and the employee councils have a major say in the organisation of the foundations.

In 1968, the "Special Labour Market Promotion Act" was introduced in Austria for the implementation of retraining and qualification measures as well as to enable "mature students" to attain school diplomas; the Act also contains provisions for financial assistance for those partaking in vocational further training measures. These promotion measures are primarily aimed at the unemployed and enable them to take part in courses free of charge.

The promotion measures for qualification within the context of the AMS also contain provisions for the systematic promotion of certain fringe groups on the labour market, such as employees without vocational training, women and the long-term unemployed.

4. Approaches to and outlook for trade union further training policy

For the ÖGB, the question of the further training of employees plays an important role within the framework of trade union policy. The representation of the ÖGB on various bodies ensures that its influence in the field of further training is relatively extensive; this applies in particular to the further training courses organised by the employee chambers, participation in all bodies of the Labour Market Service (AMS) and the important role played by the trade unions in the development of the concept for the employment foundations (which are particularly important in a regional context).

There are two areas of further training policy in which, contrary to their objectives, the trade unions have been able to achieve very little: the stipulation of further training entitlements in the collective agreements and the implementation of a general right to training release.

Further training as an issue in collective agreements

With few exceptions, the area of further training is only included in collective agreements in the form of programmatical calls for further training as an element of employee rights and obligations. The collective agreement for the savings bank sector, for example, states the following:

„The employees undertake to extend their vocational knowledge to the best of their ability and/or to utilise opportunities offered by the savings bank for this purpose. The savings bank will make specialised literature and other further training options available on an appropriate scale."

There are also collective agreements which stipulate certain explicitly purpose-based leave provisions. By agreement with their employer, for example, employees in Austrian industry can take unpaid leave of one to two weeks in order to prepare for examinations within the framework of further technical training at intermediate-level/higher vocational training colleges or at universities.

The collective agreement for technical stage personnel seems to contain the most extensive provisions. According to this agreement, technical stage employees are entitled to 5 working days leave per "theatre year" for voluntary training and further training measures, and this entitlement may only be denied by the employers for important company-related reasons.

It is therefore the case that, although they have the aim of securing the entitlement to further training for employees in collective agreements, the trade unions have only succeeded in this endeavour to a minor degree and in exceptional cases.

In addition to achieving suitable opportunities in the various collective agreements, therefore, the ÖGB is also pursuing the central aim of pushing through legislation on training release on national level. They have, however, been unsuccessful in this endeavour to date.

Continuous Vocational Training in Europe - Documentation on the Social Dialogue

Chapter 4

Information dossiers on three new EU member states

4.2

Sweden

1. Initial situation

The "social dialogue" and the field of trade union further training policy in Sweden are currently undergoing a process of far-reaching change. The same applies to the economic and social framework for relations between employers and trade unions: the international competitive situation is becoming ever-more intensive, and structural and cycle-based unemployment in Sweden has led to an unemployment rate which would have been unthinkable in Sweden only a short time ago - even though it is still the lowest in Europe. The unemployment rate is currently 8%, and a further 6% of employees are involved in state job creation schemes. Swedish labour market policy has always seen its role as an active preventive one geared towards achieving full employment. It prefers the funding of further training measures aimed at integrating people in the work environment to the direct payment of unemployment benefits.

Sweden is the economic leader among the Nordic countries due to its strength on the export front. Around one third of Sweden's national product is achieved on the international markets. Around half of those employed in industry produce goods for export. Due to their importance, the big export-oriented companies exercise a major influence on the contents of collective agreements. The intensification of competition on the world market has also led to high cost pressure in Sweden in recent years as well as far-reaching changes in the fields of production technology and work organisation. With a total 83% employment rate among the 15 - 64 year olds - almost half of them women - Sweden is one of the world leaders in this area. Around 25% of all employees work on a part-time basis. The biggest employers include the state and the municipalities. In 1990 around 41% of all employees worked in the public sector (including state-run companies).

During six decades of almost uninterrupted Social Democrat-led governments (1932 - 1976, 1982 - 1991, and again since 1994), a close-knit social welfare net was built up in Sweden as well as a wide range of institutionalised participation structures for employers and trade unions. Under the Conservative governments, the extension of employee rights and state welfare policy was brought to a halt, and a system of decentralised decision-making was introduced in the field of training policy based on the principle of independent responsibility and the consolidation of the state finances. In 1992 the biggest employer federation SAF terminated the tripartite system of cooperation in the state committees and bodies.

2. Development of industrial relations and their significance for further training policy

The Swedish trade unions play an important political role due to the high level of unionisation among both blue-collar and white-collar employees. More than 80% of blue-collar employees are members of a union (with a level as high as 90% in the organisational district of the LO umbrella federation). The trade unions are mainly structured according to two criteria: white-collar and blue-collar on the one hand and private and public sector on the other.

There are three big umbrella organisations: the *Landsorganisationen (LO)*, with 2.2 million members in 21 industrial trade unions is the oldest umbrella organisation and its members are mainly employees from the retail and industrial sectors. The *Tjänstemännens Centralorganisation (TCO)* with 1.3 million members is the umbrella organisation of the white-collar unions from the private and public sectors. The LO and TCO are members of the European Trade Union Confederation. The *Centralorganisation SACO (Sveriges Akademikers Centralorganisation)* is the umbrella organisation for the academic white-collar employees of the municipalities and the state; its member unions have around 260,000 members.

The Swedish trade unions have their origins in the "worker education movement". Worker study circles are seen as their most important historical roots, and questions of training and education still play an important role in their policies. The LO and the TCO both operate their own educational associations which are organised as providers of adult education.

The biggest and most influential employer federation in Sweden (with over 34 member federations) is the *Svenska Arbetsgivareföreningen (SAF)*. There are also three umbrella organisations for public-sector employers.

Since the beginning of the seventies, the system of industrial relations in Sweden has undergone a process of far-reaching change. Following the expansion of the welfare state, the state and the municipalities became the biggest employers. The public and private service sectors boomed and the number of white-collar employees increased constantly; as a result, the trade unions and umbrella organisations for white-collar and public-sector employees gained considerably in influence.

During the 80s, there was a shift in bias within the trade union movement; due to the increasing importance of the service sector, the white-collar unions became stronger and the traditional negotiating axis between the LO and the SAF (the biggest employer federation) collapsed. Disputes within the unions over the continuation of solidarity-based wage policy, the big industrial conflict of 1980, and the changing political climate under the Conservative governments since 1976 speeded up the decentralisation of industrial relations.

In the 70s and 80s, the system of industrial relations was based above all on an understanding that the employers and trade unions would regulate their affairs - including wage policy - before the state had cause to intervene. At the same time, a close-knit network of corporatist structures had developed in the trade union-friendly climate of Social Democrat rule, and this network gave the trade unions a wide range of options for influence. Moreover, the LO - the biggest Swedish trade union federation - cooperated closely with the Social Democrat party up to the beginning of the nineties.

After 1984, sectoral wage negotiations between the employer federations and the individual trade unions increasingly began to replace central and nationwide collective agreements. In 1990 the central wage negotiations were discontinued altogether following pressure from the SAF. At the same time the SAF - the leading employer federation - increasingly called the corporatist structures into question. At the beginning of 1992, the SAF totally changed its policy and withdrew from all tripartite government committees on central and regional level. Their aim was to decentralise decision-making and negotiating rights to the benefit of the companies. After this, the trade union federations also withdrew from most of the tripartite government bodies. As a result, the corporatist structures ceased to exist as cornerstones of the "Swedish model". Nevertheless, the trade unions still send individuals to various state committees - albeit not as representatives of the federations but as experts who are close to the trade unions. This route of informal influence on government policy and case-by-case participation in commissions which draw up reform proposals or legal amendments has therefore become increasingly important for the trade unions.

The system of intra-company employee representation in Sweden is based on company-level representatives (shop stewards) of the trade unions *(fackling förtroendeman),* whose work was legally regulated by a law on the status of employee representatives in 1974. These representatives have wide-ranging information and negotiating rights in the field of production, working conditions, the financial situation of the company and personnel matters. The local trade union organisations on company level also conduct company-level negotiations to supplement the valid central or sectoral collective agreements. During the period from 1973 to 1978, the country's labour legislation was reformed and the intra-company co-determination rights of the trade unions considerably extended.

Vocational further training and personnel development are increasingly being discussed on company level in connection with changes in wage structures and the qualitative improvement of working conditions - or as the Swedes call it, the "working milieu". There are also collective agreements on questions of further training on central and sectoral level in the private sector, but the trade unions see these agreements more as joint declarations of intent than anything else, and the agreements to date have contained hardly any concrete measures to promote the quality of - and the level of participation in - further training measures.

3. Developments in the field of further training

In Sweden, adult education and vocational further training are seen as elements of a policy geared towards reducing social inequality, promoting the interests of the individual, and maintaining a qualified and motivated workforce in the interests of international competitiveness. Sweden has a long tradition of adult education - a tradition that was actively supported by the state during the decades of Social Democrat government. The active and preventive labour market policy is also mainly based on state-funded courses and measures in the field of vocational further training.

The Swedish education system has the typical characteristics of such systems in Nordic countries: a more or less standardised school-based system of general education comprising kindergartens, comprehensive school as a standard compulsory school from the age of 6 or 7 to 16, a voluntary 3-year secondary level and a mainly school-based system of initial vocational training. From the summer of 1995, when the 1992 education reform will have been fully implemented, there will be a standard secondary school with 16 programmes, of which 14 will be geared towards vocational qualifications and two towards university studies. The secondary schools will therefore incorporate school-based initial vocational training - nevertheless, all the programmes will contain common elements leading to a university entrance qualification. The chief characteristic of the education reform is the independent organisation of educational institutes - including those for adult education - in line with state goals rather than the stipulation of central rules by the state.

It is necessary to differentiate between three segments in the field of further training for adults: general adult education, labour market-based vocational further training, and intra-company further training and personnel development. In all of these areas, there is a close-knit network of institutions, private providers and measures.

In the field of general adult education, there are municipal adult education institutions, more than 120 evening schools, and independent adult education institutes of the big associations, such as churches, trade unions, sports associations, sobriety federations etc.

In the field of labour market-oriented vocational further training, adaptation and advancement training courses are staged, as well as qualification measures designed to help people re-enter the working environment. These further training courses are funded from the labour market policy budget. In the wake of the increase in unemployment among qualified skilled workers and academics in recent years, it has been necessary to extend and modify the range of qualification courses in this segment. The most important providers are - as in Denmark and Finland - the decentralised AMU centres. These state-run further training centres are independent economic entities and compete with other further training institutions in line with the requirements of the regional labour market. Their most important customer is the AMS labour administration.

Vocational further training is also organised by companies within the context of intra-company personnel development. In terms of the number of participating employees, this is the largest field of adult education, and its importance for the "adaptation qualification" of individuals as well as for the country's competitiveness on the international markets is steadily increasing. Intra-company further training is financed by the employers, and they alone decide on the scope of intra-company qualification measures as well as access to these courses.

The 1975 *Law on Release for Further Training (Training Leave Act)* laid down an individual entitlement to participation in further training measures. All employees who have worked for the same employer for at least six months or who have been in employment for at least 12 months during the preceding two years have a right (which is not limited in terms of time) to release from work for further training coupled the right to return to the company (but not necessarily to their former workplace). The law guarantees freedom of choice with regard to the type of further training course, and the employer has no say in the matter. In individual cases, the granting of scholarships or loans must be arranged with the employer or approved within the context of state labour market schemes. There are no uniform regulations on financial support for participants in further training courses. The possibility of obtaining assistance depends on the individual situation of the applicant, hos or her vocational qualifications, the security of the job, and on whether the further training measure is desired by the employer or merely approved. The trade unions are critical of this non-standardised system of assistance (which they claim leads to a great deal of injustice), and demand a fair and transparent system of scholarships. A state commission was recently set up to draw up reform proposals by the year 1996.

Insofar as they are not intra-company personnel development measures, the courses in the field of general and vocational adult education are funded from the state budget. The AMU centres generate a part of their funds themselves. Since the educational reform of 1992, the *Folkbildningsrad* (made up of representatives of the adult education providers - trade unions, churches, sports federations, sobriety federations, and evening schools as well as representatives of the municipality associations) has been responsible for deciding on the distribution of the funds made available by the state for this field of adult education. The participation of the trade unions in this process seems to be of great importance, as the Swedish state has been spending unusually high sums on adult education to date.

Along the lines of the Danish job-switch model, there are also legal regulations in Sweden which provide for the training and recruitment of unemployed individuals to substitute for participants in further training measures. The Labour Market Administration provides financial assistance for these substitution measures. This model is currently mainly used in the public sector. Measures are now being discussed which might make the system more attractive for the private sector.

4. Approaches to and outlook for trade union further training policy

The conditions for trade union further training policy in Sweden have changed dramatically in recent years: the collapse of corporatist structures and the increasing importance of intra-company personnel development have resulted in a fundamental reorientation of trade union strategies for action in the field of further training policy.

Up to the beginning of the 90s, the trade union strategies for action were mainly geared towards influencing state policy on central level through the institutionalised system of tripartite cooperation; this also applied to decisions in the field of vocational further training. Today new, informal strategies have to be developed to ensure an influence on government policy as well as within the context of the social dialogue with the employer federations. Due to the increasing importance of intra-company personnel development and a trend towards declining influence in the other two segments of adult education, the trade unions are beginning to focus their attention on intra-company further training as an important field of action. Their main demands concern co-determination in the determination of requirements and in the planning and financing of intra-company further training measures.

There is currently a debate within the trade unions on the redistribution of responsibilities. The trade unions are attempting to decentralise responsibilities for the organisation of further training policy and for the exercise of influence on the planning and implementation of intra-company further training (by concentrating more on developments on company level). The work of the company-based employee representatives has recently gained markedly in importance and the role of the trade unions is moving more towards support for these employee representatives (material, instruments and training courses). The aim is to activate the existing - but often unused - information and negotiating rights of the company-level employee representatives and to extend co-determination options in the field of company-level further training. This means a drastic shift away from the traditionally reactive concept of action of the trade unions and towards the development of new activities. This approach also takes account of new company-level management strategies which attach greater importance to personnel development and which are aimed at utilising the skills of employees - and therefore also those of the trade union employee representatives - to develop flexible and decentralised problem-solving concepts.

The decentralised negotiations on the company bonuses which many employers pay over and above the agreed wages and which are negotiated by the company-level trade union representatives are part of a policy in which non-material objects of negotiation are playing an increasingly important role. The development of wages is being linked to other fields of action - in particular changes in wage structures, improvement of workplace conditions, the extension of co-determination and - last not least - questions connected with the promotion of the skills of employees and the improvement of conditions for qualification.

There are also sporadic collective agreements on sectoral level which try to link several areas of policy. One collective agreement in the public sector (1991) links wage policy with the development of the "working milieu". This agreement stipulates that part of the wage increase is to remain unpaid and instead invested in personnel development measures. This agreement follows the tradition of collective agreement-based *renewal funds* in the private sector which were in effect between 1986 and 1991 and which stipulated that part of the wage increase and 10% of the profits of big corporations should be invested in the development of personnel resources, further training and research.

Using these funds for intra-company measures proved to be a major problem in the private sector, however. The trade union employee representatives were seldom able to take the initiative within a traditional framework of centralist wage policy. The TCO trade union federation therefore developed information material to help the company-based trade union officials to ascertain further training requirements and push for implementation of the necessary measures.

Although the emphasis of trade union further training policy has shifted towards company-based further training, the trade unions believe that the general system of adult education - as embodied by such institutions as study circles - still plays an important role. Such institutions are seen as a way of overcoming education barriers and an initial route into the world of further training, particularly for those employees unaccustomed to education and learning. According to the unions, measures to promote participation in training and education measures are becoming an increasingly important element in the endeavour to reduce the growing education gap between a highly qualified younger generation and an older generation with fewer qualifications and a lower educational motivation.

Following the collapse of the Swedish corporatist system, the Swedish trade unions hope that involvement in the social dialogue on the level of the European Union will provide positive stimuli which might encourage the employers to revive the system of tripartite cooperation on national level.

By way of summary, it is fair to say that, following the collapse of corporatist structures, the erosion of the close links between the LO and the Social Democrat party, and the gradual decentralisation of collective agreements, the cornerstones of the "Swedish model" have ceased to exist. Nevertheless, the trade unions still exercise a major influence on state policy in the area of labour market measures and further training. It must be said, however, that the emphasis of trade union further training policy has shifted in the direction of company-based further training and decentralised strategies for action.

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Chapter 4

Information dossiers on three new EU member states

4.3

Finland

1. Initial situation

During the course of the present century, Finland has undergone profound changes both in economic and social terms: as a "late industrialiser", it has developed from a peripheral agricultural economy and raw material supplier into a modern industrialised and welfare state. Today, the industries which have their roots in Finland's timber wealth (wooden products, paper, cellulose and printed products) make up the backbone of the Finnish economy together with the metal and machine construction industries. This far-reaching structural change was accompanied by high growth in the service sector and increasing employment in the public sector. In 1993, around 31 % of employees worked in the public sector.

Following a phase of strong economic growth in the 80s, Finland's economy is currently in the middle of its worst recession since the Second World War: during the 90s, Finnish GNP declined by more than 12 %, the Finnmark lost one third of its value, and the strict cost-cutting policy of the government led to a fall in domestic demand. Alongside the worldwide recession it was mainly the collapse of Eastern trade through the loss of the Soviet Union as a trading partner which drove Finland into this economic crisis. During the booming period of Eastern trade at the beginning of the 80s, 27 % of Finnish exports went to the Soviet Union; by the beginning of the 90s, this figure had fallen to a mere 3 %. Not least due to country's entry into the EU, Finland is currently orienting itself more towards Central and Western Europe.

At the beginning of the 90s, the economic crisis led to galloping unemployment, and the unemployment rate rose from 3.4% to the current level of over 19% in just three years. This means that Finland has the second highest unemployment rate in the EU after Eire. By 1993, half of those previously employed by companies in the machine construction sector no longer had jobs, and highly skilled workers and academics were seriously affected for the first time. Youth unemployment and long-term unemployment also rose dramatically: unemployment among the young increased to one third in 1993.

One special feature of the Finnish economy is the predominance of small and medium-sized companies. Throughout the country, there are only 130 companies with more than 500 employees but more than 23,000 companies with fewer than 100 employees (1993). The employment rate is nevertheless high: 70 % of men and 61% of women of employable age are working or looking for work. Part-time jobs account for less than 10% of all jobs in Finland.

Until the Conservatives formed a single-party government from 1991 - 1995, decades of Social Democrat participation in government had created political favourable conditions for trade union activities and the development of corporatist structures.

2. Development of industrial relations and their significance for further training policy

The level of unionisation in Finland - as in the other Nordic countries - is high, with around 80% of blue-collar employees and a traditionally even higher percentage of white-collar employees belonging to trade unions. These unionisation levels and well-developed corporatist structures form the basis for the widespread influence of the Finnish trade unions.

The Finnish single-industry unions are divided up among three large umbrella federations, which are all members of the European Trade Union Confederation. There are no longer any politically oriented trade unions in Finland. Up to the present, the oldest umbrella organisation, the central organisation of the Finnish trade unions *Suomen Ammattiliitojen Keskusjärjestö (SAK)* has played a leading role in the centralised collective negotiations. The SAK comprises unions from the manufacturing sector and the construction and transport industries as well as several of the bigger unions for public service employees. Its 24 member unions have around 1.1 million members.

In 1993, after the serious economic crisis forced several trade union-owned companies as well as the TVK trade union federation into bankruptcy, the *STTK* was founded together by new trade unions as the *Finnish Federation for White-Collar Employees*. This new trade union federation has 23 member unions with around 599,000 members.

The third-largest umbrella organisation - the Federation of Trade Unions for Academic Employees *Akateeminen Yhteisvaltuuskunta (AKAVA)* comprises trade unions which are primarily organised along the lines of professional associations. Its 32 member unions have around 320,000 members, around two thirds of whom work in the public sector.

There are a number of umbrella organisations on the employer side. The most influential federation in the private sector is the Finnish Industrial and Employers' Federation *Teollisuus ja Työnantajat (TT)*. This federation was set up in 1991 following the merger of the *STK* employer federation and the *TKL* Central Association of Industry. Alongside these organisations, there is also the *LTK* (an association of service companies from the trading, restaurant, banking and insurance sector) and the *MTL* (association of agricultural employers).

There are four employer federations in the public sector: the *KT* (municipalities), the *VMTL* (state), the *LTY* (nationalised companies) and the *KiSV* (Lutheran Church).

The current status of industrial relations - characterised by the influential umbrella organisations on both sides, corporatist structures, and a tradition of centralised collective bargaining - exhibits characteristics which are considered typical of the "Nordic model" of industrial relations. However, this system of industrial relations did not necessarily "come naturally" to Finland. It was not until the end of the 60s that a tripartite "historic compromise" put an end to decades of intense social conflict (1916 - 1944) and the fragmentation of the trade unions resulting from the struggle between Communists and Social Democrats over the leading role within the working people's movement (1944 - 1968). In 1968 the way was paved for centralised collective bargaining incorporating the state as well as for a joint incomes policy. The collective negotiations in Finland are still characterised by this tradition, but there are signs that changes are on the way.

Up to the present, negotiations have been conducted centrally - in other words on the level of the umbrella organisations. During these negotiations, joint guidelines were laid down for collective agreements in the various sectors. A nationwide collective agreement was then concluded for each sector. A central agreement has been concluded in all but four years since 1968. However, these central agreements only appeared to "guarantee" the uniform development of incomes on the basis of agreement between the state, the employers and the trade unions, since the fact that the member unions of the umbrella organisations decided whether or not to accept the negotiated agreements meant that the implementation of these centralised collective agreements was not assured. In each negotiating round, individual unions with a lot of "muscle" conducted new negotiations on company or sector level, if necessary using strikes as a means of pushing through their demands. This strategy is one of the reasons for the comparatively high strike rate in Finland compared to other European countries as well as for the increasing wage differentials. The failure of these centralised negotiations to take account of differing economic and employment-related trends in the sectors and companies of the country combined with the onset of the recession at the end of the 80s to provoke a fierce debate on the feasibility of centrally controlled incomes policy.

In the wake of the worst recession since 1945, rapidly rising unemployment, and (from 1991) a Conservative government without Social Democrat participation, the political climate and the conditions for the social dialogue changed markedly. In 1991 the employers put forward new demands in their so-called 14-point programme: wage cuts, social welfare cuts, and greater flexibility of labour legislation and collective negotiations.

Since the beginning of the 90s, there have been signs of far-reaching changes in the Finnish system of collective negotiations. The incomes policy based on central collective agreements practised since 1968 seems to be coming to an end. In 1993 the employers refused to conduct centralised negotiations and tried to prevent the government from exercising any influence on the collective negotiations. Instead, they started negotiations with the individual trade unions on sector level which ignored the central agreements. As a result, the incomes policies of the various sectors and the terms of collective agreements began to diverge considerably. Today, both the employers and the trade unions are pushing for the conclusion of local company-based agreements to supplement the sectoral agreements.

We are now seeing a development towards decentralisation of collective negotiations and increasing sector-based and company-based flexibility of working conditions and wages. Whether these new forms of social dialogue will replace the centralised corporatist structures in the future remains to be seen. There were also periods during the eighties when the centralised collective negotiations encountered serious obstacles.

The heart of the employee representation system on company level is a network of trade union representatives or shop stewards *(luottamusmiesjärjestelmä).* These employee representatives form a committee which itself has no formal rights. The 1979 *Law on Cooperation in Companies* and its counterpart in the public sector adopted in 1988 govern the cooperation between the individual employees and their superiors as well as the work of the representatives in companies with more than 30 employees. It provides affected employees or their representatives with information and consultation rights in all questions relating to training, redundancy and changes in working conditions. Medium-sized and large companies have to draw up annual intra-company further training schedules, and the employee representatives are generally consulted regarding content and budget.

In addition, a central agreement between employers and trade unions on the work of the employee representatives was renewed by the umbrella organisations in 1989. This agreement stipulates that the representatives are responsible for monitoring adherence to laws and collective agreements as well as "peace within the company". Moreover, regulations were laid down for the resolution of intra-company conflicts between employers and trade unions.

3. Developments in the field of further training

Like all the Nordic countries, Finland has a long tradition of general education for adults. This tradition spawned a close-knit network of educational institutions and a high level of participation in educational measures among the adult population (1990: 44.1% of all 18-73 year olds). There are three subareas of further training: the general "voluntary" system of adult education, vocational further training within the context of state labour market policy, and company-based vocational further training in connection with the concept of personnel development.

In 1991 around 860,000 adults - around 24% of the 18-73 year olds - took part in the general education courses offered by the approx. 450 different adult education institutions. Most of the institutions in the field of adult education are directly funded by the state or municipalities or belong to cultural organisations.

The area of labour market-based vocational further training is designed to overcome the effects of far-reaching structural and technological changes as well as changes in the field of work organisation and the problems caused by high unemployment. The institutional "heart" of the further training measures organised within the context of state labour market policy are the so-called AMU centres in the municipalities. These centres organise initial vocational training courses for adults, preparatory courses for those wishing to re-enter the working environment, and "adaptation qualification" courses. The AMU centres compete with one another as providers of further training courses as well as with other public and private institutions. In 1992/93, the number of participants in qualification measures within the context of state labour market policy (open to the unemployed, those threatened by unemployment, and those wishing to return to the working environment) levelled out at over 70,000, although the number of applicants for these courses was considerably higher.

One special feature of the Finnish system is the well-developed system of further training courses for academics and academic training courses for non-academics at special further training centres in the universities. These centres offer study refresher courses for academics as well as "open university" courses.

Finally, the system of intra-company further training within the context of personnel development is also becoming increasingly important in quantitative terms in Finland. Last year around 600,000 employees took part in company-based further training courses. In this area, educational institutions run by the industrial federations and special vocational colleges organise further training measures for companies which are geared towards specific company interests.

In 1992, general adult education accounted for 38% of the approx. 9.1 million further training hours, while voluntary vocational training accounted for 23%, labour market-based vocational further training for 22% and company-based further training for 17%.

The various forms of vocational further training in Finland follow a predominantly school-based system of initial training which also incorporates work experience placements in companies and administration.

Initial vocational training is organised in training courses lasting between 2 and 6 years (depending on level) at three different types of college or institute. There are a total of around 250 vocations. In 1991, 45% of the approx. 540 initial training institutions - which are increasingly also offering further training courses - were run by the municipalities and 36% by the state. One special feature of the Finnish system is the variable duration of training: the same diploma can be attained over varying periods of time depending on the prior educational qualifications of the participants. Irrespective of their previous schooling, all students have the right to take part in all vocational training courses.

The work release legislation adopted in 1979 gives employees who have worked for the same employer for at least one year the right to take part in any further training courses they want. If certain conditions are fulfilled, employees may leave the workplace for a maximum of 2 years (within a five year period of employment with the same employer) in order to take part in further training measures without losing their jobs. This two-year further training leave may be taken all at once or in several stages.

Depending on the type of further training and the individual situation of the participants, there are a number of financial assistance schemes for further training. Further training times within the context of intra-company personnel development programmes are generally recognised (and paid) as working time on the basis of a framework agreement which has been in force for some time. For these courses, the employer also pays the cost of travel and materials. The same applies to the further training of elected employee representatives. If an employee applies for leave for "self-motivated" further training, the employer may pay part of the course fees, but this system of co-financing has to be negotiated with the employer on a case to case basis.

Participants in further training courses within the context of labour market policy receive financial assistance from the state: unemployed persons receive assistance equivalent to unemployment benefit up to a maximum 60% of their last wage. In addition, the state also offers low-interest loans to promote participation in further training measures.

As the result of the social dialogue, a new system of financial assistance for the older long-term unemployed who take part in further training measures was introduced in 1989 - the *Fund for Vocational Training and Compensation Payments.* In 1991, payments were extended to include employees who had worked for at least a year, were older than 30 and who took part in vocational further training measures (including university studies) within the context of individual training leave. The assistance from these funds is paid over and above the state unemployment benefit. This assistance is financed from contributions of the employers to the income-based unemployment insurance system which is jointly managed by the employers and the trade unions. The size of the percentage contribution from the unemployment insurance system to the assistance fund is reviewed annually. This model is currently in the trial phase until the end of 1995. No decision has yet been made on continuation. The introduction of the fund has led to a considerable increase in participation in further training measures, particularly in the area of university studies. Ever since the implementation of cuts in the system of state assistance for general adult education and vocational further training, however, the number of participants has begun to fall again. The trade unions see this development as being due to the tight financial situation of Finnish companies and private households.

On May 1, 1994 the *Law on Vocational Training Certificates* brought fundamental changes to the field of certification for vocational qualifications for skilled workers. This law is the outcome of tripartite cooperation between trade unions, employers and the government, and both employers and trade unions are actively involved in its implementation.

The aim of the reforms is to build up a skill-oriented examination procedure for the certification of vocational skills, knowledge and experience, irrespective of the way in which these skills, knowledge etc. were attained. Skills acquired during the course of many years work can also be examined and certified without the applicant having to attend a specific training course beforehand.

The system incorporates two qualification levels: basic vocational training - comparable with qualifications from initial vocational training - and specialised vocational qualifications. The examined qualifications on the first level are equivalent to qualifications which are also attained during initial vocational training.

The basic examination requirements were laid down for each sector by the National Education Council on the basis of proposals by expert bodies made up of representatives of the employers, the trade unions, teachers, and research and education authorities. Regional examination boards are responsible for the planning and monitoring of the examinations. These boards are made up of representatives of the employers, the trade unions, teachers and - where applicable - the self-employed of the sector in question. The majority of the maximum of 9 members of an examination board must be representatives of employers and trade unions. Contracted vocational training institutions are responsible for staging the examinations.

This reform was accompanied by a reform in the field of apprenticeship training; however, this reform does not concern the area of initial vocational training but introduces a new element into the system of vocational further training: semi-skilled and unskilled workers can participate in further training measures on the basis of an apprenticeship contract and can apply for recognition of existing skills within the context of the new certification system. In this way, they can attain a certified skilled worker qualification.

The high unemployment rate among academics and management employees prompted the introduction of a further innovative project in 1994: under the name KEKO, the employers, the trade unions and the state cooperated with the Ministries of Labour, Education, Trade and Industry in setting up a qualification project for this group of people. This project is also designed to promote the competitiveness of small and medium-sized companies. The basic idea of the 6-9 month programmes is to assign development tasks in companies to unemployed qualified people and, in this way, to provide them with the opportunity to gather occupational experience based on "learning by doing" whilst at the same time giving them the chance to acquire qualifications in labour market-oriented further training courses. The specialised skills of this group of people benefit the smaller companies, which profit from their know-how in areas such as product development, management, personnel training etc.

The participants in the KEKO project receive financial assistance from the state equivalent to unemployment benefit, and the companies pay an additional modest sum. In 1994 the first 1,000 unemployed academics took part in this programme. Assessments to date of the effects this scheme has in terms of reintegrating people in the labour market are extremely positive; 2,000 new participants are scheduled to take part in the programme this year.

4. Approaches to and outlook for trade union further training policy

The Finnish trade unions traditionally have a great deal of influence on the labour market and vocational training policies of the government. This influence is mainly based on the wide-ranging corporatist structures. As the new certification system and the KEKO project show, the trade unions exercise their influence through participation in reforms and model projects. Through their involvement in the reform of the certification system, the trade unions intend to represent - in particular -the interests of the group of employees without formal qualifications. The relevant figures from the field of labour market-oriented further training show that their numbers are still high: more than one third of all graduates from further training measures between 1991 and 1993 had not undergone any previous vocational training. It is hoped that the certification of existing skills will help this group of employees to build up their "vocational self-confidence" and therefore motivate them to take part in further training measures in the future.

In the European context, the Finnish model deserves particular attention, as it is the result of systematic tripartite cooperation and as - against the background of an existing state system of initial vocational training and a nationwide system of recognised qualifications - the trade unions believe it is free of the fundamental deficiencies of the British NVQ system.

In Finland, an innovative qualification model resulting from a tripartite social dialogue has been developed for groups of people who are being affected by unemployment in greater numbers for the first time - namely academics and highly qualified management and other employees. One of the strengths of the KEKO project - in the development of which the AKAVA trade union played an important role - is the combination of several fields of action; moreover, the promotion of small and medium-sized companies and the definition of academics and management personnel as a target group goes far beyond the scope of traditional trade union fields of action.

For the Finnish trade unions, further training in connection with labour market policy is the most important field of action in the field of adult training and education; moreover, the trade unions have a say in the organisation of the state education system and the system of scholarships through their participation in the relevant committees and bodies.

It is apparent that the Finnish trade unions are aiming to achieve a closer link between incomes policy and further training policy. They see their further training policy as being increasingly geared towards ensuring that a greater part of the funds currently paid to those in employment in the form of wages and salaries is diverted to the qualification of employees. Their aim is to create a framework for collective agreements on working conditions on company level.

Overall, it is the corporatist structures and the legal regulations in Finland which give the trade unions their influence in the field of further training policy on central +and national level. Their declared strategy is one of concentrating more on influencing the conditions in the field of vocational further training than on the implementation of these conditions on company level. The collective negotiations are still dominated by the classic issues such as wages and working conditions. Vocational further training on company level seems to be only a marginal field of action for the trade unions. Against the background of the increasing importance of personnel development and attempts to decentralise collective bargaining procedures, however, there are initial signs of a shift in emphasis in this area.

Continuous Vocational Training in Europe - Documentation on the Social Dialogue

Chapter 5

Glossary

Four central concepts in the field of industrial relations and further training in Europe:

Social dialogue

Employee representatives and participation rights on company and corporate level

Further training

Financing of further training

Social dialogue

"Social dialogue" generally means any kind of organised communication between representatives of employees and employers (unions and management). Although the term is also used on company level, it is more frequently found on the regional, national or international political level.

Alongside the employee and employer representatives, other parties - in particular the state - may also be involved in the "social dialogue". This is also called "bilateral" dialogue, or - if a third party is also involved - "tripartite" dialogue.

The term "social dialogue" has nothing to do with the "social sector" in the sense of state or private welfare for the "weaker" members of society.

It is a European concept based on the French model of incorporating trade unions and management in the process of reaching a consensus on political issues. It was officially included in the Treaty of Rome of the European Communities in 1988 in Article 118b of the Single European Act and therefore raised to "constitutional status". In Article 118b, the European Commission is explicitly obliged to develop the "social dialogue" between the federations of the employees and employers, and this may also lead to contractual relationships.

One important field in which the European "social dialogue" operates is vocational training. In this area, the EU Commission takes great pains to incorporate employers and trade unions in the development of European strategies. This is clearly reflected in the decisions of the EU concerning the FORCE programme and the LEONARDO programme for the promotion of vocational training (1991 and 1994) and its recommendations concerning improved access to further training (1993). Like almost no other EU promotion programmes, FORCE and LEONARDO are characterised by structures and procedures designed to cater to the needs of social dialogue - in other words, they are designed to ensure incorporation and cooperation of trade unions and employers in the formulation of policy in this area.

The term "social dialogue" has meanwhile become part of the various national debates on industrial relations. In a general sense, "social dialogue" is taken to mean all discussions between trade unions and employers on company, regional, sector, national or European level. The collective negotiations in the various sectors are therefore also a form of social dialogue leading to an agreement (of limited duration) on certain issues - working conditions, wages, further training etc. In all the countries of the EU, there is dialogue of differing intensity and relevance and on different levels concerning questions of further training as an area of non-material or "soft" working conditions: this dialogue takes the form of discussions, joint statements and agreements. Up to the present, binding agreements in the field of further training have been the exception rather than the rule, but there has been an increase in the number of such agreements in various countries in recent years. In the employer federations, the general feeling seems to be that dialogue is an end in itself and need not result in binding agreements; the trade unions, on the other hand, believe that a minimum level of obligation is needed if they are to fulfil their protective and organisational functions.

Employee representatives and participation rights on company and corporate level

Preliminary remarks

The provisions for the participation and co-determination rights of employees and trade unions with regard to decisions on company level vary considerably between the member states of the European Union. There are several areas in which differences exist:

Firstly, the *degree to which participation rights are "formalised":* these rights can range from informal "traditional" provisions and formal agreements between trade unions and employer federations to statutory regulations. The extent and scope of these rights vary when it comes to legal stipulations. Whereas there are separate legal regulations on "co-determination" in some countries, participation rights are integrated in general labour legislation in others. Wherever there are separate provisions on participation rights, the scope of influence is generally wider than in countries where these rights are part of general labour legislation.

A second important aspect is the *relationship between trade union and intra-company representatives:* there are countries in which employee participation in the decision-making process in companies is effected solely by trade union bodies, countries in which there is a parallel system for the articulation of employee interests (elected intra-company representative bodies and trade union representatives alongside one another), and countries in which the participation rights are exercised solely by intra-company representative bodies and where the trade unions are (at least formally) excluded from intra-company procedures.

A third criterion is the *composition* of the elected representative bodies within the companies: in some countries, these bodies are made up exclusively of employee representatives, whilst in others these bodies are combined committees (frequently chaired by the employer).

Finally, there is the question of *scope of content:* the provisions range from information and a right to be heard to co-determination and the monitoring of decisions. Participation is more widespread when it comes to social or personnel matters than in organisational and financial decisions.

The following brief descriptions look at the various forms and characteristics of participation in the countries of the European Union, and particular attention is paid to participation in questions of vocational training. Alongside the various forms of participation on company level, most countries also have some framework for additional provisions in the fields of safety, accident prevention and health, but the latter are not dealt with in any detail in this glossary.

Belgium

On the basis of various collective agreements, the trade union representatives or delegates in the companies ("Délégation syndicale") have the right to be heard as well as the right to work release and participation in training measures. They are also entitled to conduct collective negotiations on company level.

In companies with more than 100 employees, there are statutory "company councils" ("Conseil d'entreprise") made up of equal numbers of employee and employer representatives and chaired by a representative of the employer. The members of these councils are released from their work duties to enable them to perform their duties on the council and enjoy protection against dismissal. These councils generally have an advisory character; they have information rights concerning the financial situation of the company as well as with regard to personnel planning. They also have co-determination rights in the formulation and amendment of work regulations, as well as a right to be heard on matters in the field of personnel policy and company-based vocational training programmes.

Employees have no basic right to participate in the decision-making procedures within the company.

Denmark

The collective working conditions are regulated by agreements between trade unions and employers. In the companies, the trade union representatives have a right to release from work duties and protection against dismissal. In companies with more than 35 employees, there are parity-based cooperation committees chaired by a management employee. These committees have wide-ranging information rights and can also formulate basic principles concerning working conditions, personnel matters and (further) training.

In companies with more than 35 employees, the employees elect 2 delegates to the administrative board of the company in a general ballot.

Germany

There are no legal regulations governing the work of trade union representatives in German companies. In companies with more than 5 employees, however, the employees have a legal right to elect an employee council ("Betriebsrat"). This employee council is made up solely of employee representatives, and its size depends on the total number of employees. It has information, consultation and co-determination rights. The members of the employee council enjoy special protection against dismissal and are released from work duties for their council duties. The employee council is not a trade union body, but as most of the employee council members are also members of a trade union, there is normally close cooperation with the unions. The unions are also entitled to take part in the meetings of the employee council.

The employee council may only conclude company agreements on topics which are not already regulated in collective agreements between the trade unions and the employer federations. The employee council also has co-determination rights, particularly in personnel matters as well as in the organisation of intra-company training measures.

In big companies, the employees elect their own representatives to the supervisory board (up to half of the members of this body depending on the size of company). Moreover, they also have a legal right to appoint a fully-fledged member of the board of management responsible for social and personnel matters (the so-called "Arbeitsdirektor"). Like all the other board members, this member is elected by the entire supervisory board. The employee representatives only have a right of veto with regard to the appointment of this board member in the coal, iron and steel industries.

Greece

In Greece there are legal provisions governing the work of the interest-representing bodies. The trade union representatives in the company have a right to be heard, enjoy protection against dismissal, and are entitled to free time for their duties. One special feature is that 10 employees in a company may found a new trade union (grass-roots union) - however, this new union has to be recognised by a court of law. Once each month the employer has to hold discussions with the intra-company trade union representatives on pressing problems. The grass-roots unions negotiate working conditions and wages on company level.

In companies with more - and sometimes fewer - than 50 employees, the workforce may demand that an employee council be set up. The members of this council are elected by all the employees of the company. The employee council is involved in financial and social matters within the company and is also active in the field of vocational training. A meeting with the employer has to take place every two months. Like the trade union representatives, the members of the employee council enjoy special protection against dismissal, are entitled to a certain amount of free time to perform their duties and are also entitled to take part in further training measures.

In private companies in some sectors, supervisory boards have been set up on company level; employee representatives also belong to these boards. However, these supervisory boards do not have the right to appoint management executives. In the big public sector in Greece, the rights of these bodies are more extensive.

Spain

Both the trade union representatives within the company (trade union sections) and the employee representatives elected by the workforce (in companies with between 6 and 49 employees) as well as the members of the employee council (in companies with 50 and more employees) have statutory information rights and the right to be heard. The employee councils also have the right to conclude agreements on company level. The employee councils have the right to be heard on, among other things, intra-company vocational training programmes. The activities of the employee council members (and of the trade union representatives in companies with more than 250 employees) are backed up by statutory protection against dismissal and release from work duties.

The tripartite agreement on further training concluded between the state, the trade unions and the employer federation at the end of 1992 stipulates that company further training programmes are only to be financed from the national further training fund if the employee council in question has approved the plans.

In the public sector, an agreement between employers and trade unions provides for the participation of employee representatives in management decision-making processes.

France

The trade union representatives on company level ("Délégués syndicaux") have the right to negotiate collective agreements and enjoy protection against dismissal as well as the right to release from work duties irrespective of the size of the company.

Alongside the trade union representatives, there are also the workforce representatives ("Délégués du personnel"), who are elected by the employees in the company and who monitor adherence to the provisions of labour legislation and collective agreements.

The company committee ("Comité d'entreprise") is a body of mixed composition with information and consultation rights: although the members of these committees are elected by the workforce, the committees themselves are chaired by the employer. The intra-company training plan must be submitted to the committee for deliberation.

In big companies, the company committee can appoint two of its members as employee representatives to the supervisory or administrative board. In the public sector in particular, the number of employee representatives in these bodies may be higher. The employee representatives in these bodies have the right to put forward motions but not the right to vote on all issues. The employee representatives in management and supervisory bodies may not simultaneously act as trade union representatives.

Ireland

The role of the trade unions and employee representatives is similar to that in the United Kingdom. There is no legal foundation for the participation or codetermination of employees. There is a wide range of intra-company agreements and consultation mechanisms which can be effective without legal stipulations. Collective negotiations are generally also conducted on company level.

Employee councils - insofar as they exist - are based not on legal regulations but on individual company-level agreements or collective agreements.

As in Great Britain, there is no legal basis for the representation of employees on management and supervisory bodies. The public sector is an exception to this rule. In this sector there are legal regulations governing the election of employee representatives to the administrative boards.

Italy

In Italy, the activities of the trade union and employee representatives is based on the so-called Employee Statute of 1970 - a law containing provisions on collective rights and individual protection regulations (relocation, dismissal, paid release from work duties). The rights stipulated in this law have since been more clearly defined and extended in numerous collective agreements, and this has resulted in the creation of various types of company-level interest-representing bodies with differing rights. This varied system of employee representation is currently being reformed on the basis of a tripartite agreement concluded in 1993 by the government, the employer federations and the trade unions. In companies with more than 15 employees, standard employee representative bodies (Rappresentanzia Sindicale Unitaria - RSU) are now being set up in secret ballots; alongside the elected members, one third of the members are appointed by the trade unions. The number of members depends on the size of the company; the minimum number is three (in companies with fewer than 200 employees). These new employee representation bodies have the right to conclude company-level agreements.

On corporate level, employees have participation rights which are not founded in law but based on collective agreements (in both the public and private sectors). These rights vary from sector to sector and even from company to company.

Luxembourg

An employee council is elected by the employees in all companies with more than 15 employees. The employee representatives ("Délégués du personnel") - who have a say in social matters as well as questions relating to vocational training - enjoy protection against dismissal as well as the right to free time for their representative duties (the extent of the latter right varies according to the size of company).

It is important to distinguish between the employee representatives and the employee councils ("Comité mixte d'entreprise"); the latter are bodies made up of equal numbers of employee and employer representatives and chaired by the employer. The law stipulates that these "mixed" employee councils have to be set up in private-sector companies with more than 150 employees. These councils have consultation rights as well as decision-making rights in specific areas. Their members enjoy protection against dismissal as well as the right to paid release from work duties.

On corporate level, the employees in big private-sector companies (over 1,000 employees) and in companies in which the state has a holding are entitled to one third of the seats on the supervisory or administrative board. These board members are not directly elected by all employees, however, but by the employee representatives.

The Netherlands

As in Germany, the trade union representatives in the private sector have no legally secured participation rights - in contrast to the members of the employee councils. The law provides for the creation of employee councils - made up solely of employee representatives elected by the employees - in all companies with more than 35 employees.

The members of the employee council enjoy special protection against dismissal and are entitled to free time for their council duties. The scope of consultation, participation and co-determination rights varies among medium-sized and big companies (more than 100 employees). The employee councils have to approve regulations on intra-company (further) training if these regulations are not already part of collective agreements.

In the big corporations, the employee councils have a say in the composition of the supervisory board. They may propose candidates (who may not, however, be employees) and have a right of veto with regard to appointment (which is effected by the supervisory board itself).

Co-determination rights also exist in the public sector but are subject to different regulations.

Portugal

The intra-company trade union representatives are elected by the employees in line with the rules laid down by the trade union in question. These representatives have legally secured information rights, enjoy special protection against dismissal, and are entitled to release from work duties to a modest degree. The trade union representatives are also legally entitled to conduct collective negotiations insofar as the trade unions do not conduct such negotiations on supra-company level.

Alongside the trade union representatives, there are also (statutory) employee councils elected by the employees in a direct ballot. The members of the employee council enjoy special protection against dismissal and have far greater rights to release from work duties than the trade union representatives. The employee councils have consultation rights in several areas, including the organisation of agreed vocational promotion measures.

The employees only have the right to be represented in the management bodies of the company in the public sector, where the employee council can appoint at least one member of the supervisory board.

United Kingdom

The role of the employee representatives in companies is mainly performed by the trade union representatives - the "shop stewards". The shop stewards have no legally secured rights; their activities are based on tradition and agreements.

Accordingly, the role of the shop stewards may differ considerably from company to company and sector to sector. Wage negotiations in particular are mainly conducted at company level. Much depends on whether the employer in question recognises the trade unions represented in the company - something he is not obliged to do.

All employees involved in trade union activities within the company enjoy special protection against dismissal. The trade union representatives also have the right to release from work duties within the framework of the company-level agreements.

There are no legal provisions concerning employee councils of the Continental type; however, various kinds of advisory bodies on which the employees are represented have developed within British companies.

In the past various proposals have been made (and put to the test) for employee participation on management bodies, but there is no general model for such participation.

Austria

The co-determination rights of employees in Austria are regulated by an Industrial Constitution Act.

An employee council has to be set up in all companies with more than five employees if the employees so wish. The employee council is a body which represents the interests of the workforce and which is directly elected by the workforce. The employee council is therefore not a trade union body; as, however, the majority of elected employee council members are also trade union members, the influence of the trade unions should not be underestimated.

The rights of the employee council include information, consultation and co-determination rights. Whereas the information and consultation rights apply to all company activities, the co-determination rights are far more narrowly defined. These rights generally apply to social and personnel matters. This means that the employee councils also have a say in the area of company-based vocational further training. The employee councils also have the right to conclude company-level agreements with the employer on issues for which they are responsible.

In corporations comprising several companies, the employee councils in the individual companies can elect a certain number of members to the corporate employee council; this ensures that the employees are also able to exercise influence on corporate level.

Sweden

In Sweden, the participation of employees on company level is based on a system of trade union "shop stewards", whose activities were regulated in a 1994 law on the "status of employee representatives". These shop stewards have wide-ranging information and negotiating rights in questions relating to production, working conditions, personnel matters and the financial situation of the company.

Alongside these shop stewards, the local trade union organisations are also active on company level. The latter conduct company-level negotiations on the implementation of sectoral or central collective agreements.

Finland

The Finnish model of employee participation on company level is based on a "shop steward" network; this system was not legally regulated until 1979 (for the private sector) and 1988 (for the public sector). Within the company, the shop stewards form a committee, but this committee has no rights of its own. The legal regulations apply to companies with at least 30 employees and provide the employees and their representative organs with information and consultation rights on all questions connected with vocational training, dismissals and changes in working conditions. Medium-sized and big companies have to draw up intra-company further training plans each year, and the contents of these plans are generally discussed with the shop stewards.

In addition, a central agreement between employers and trade unions now regulates the activities of the shop stewards in Finnish companies.

Further training

"Further training" is defined as education and training activities entered into after an individual has completed initial training (of whatever kind). These activities or training courses and the institutions responsible for their organisation are assigned to the "field of further training".

It is important to distinguish between *vocational* further training on the one hand and *socio-political* further training on the other - the two different types of further training generally belong in different categories. However, the trade unions in particular attach importance to the interlinking of these different types of further training. It seems to be the case that purely vocation-related further training does not fully satisfy the objectives of adaptation to new conditions, individual vocational development or the promotion of specific groups (e.g. women) and that it is therefore necessary to supplement these courses with other kinds of further training.

Training comprises in particular further training and retraining.

In the field of general education, all countries operate a school-based system of initial training which is clearly separate from the field of general further training.

In the field of vocational further training, however, the boundaries between initial training and further training are less clear (or even non-existent), depending on the country and the group of people in question. In courses for young unemployed people, for example, it is often impossible to distinguish between training and further training. In many countries, therefore, the integration of these young people in the labour market is therefore seen as belonging to the field of further training.

In countries with a company-based training system and associated certification systems, there is generally a clear boundary between initial vocational training and further training in terms of contents, organisational forms, legal basis, funding etc.

Vocational further training courses take place in educational institutions such as schools and universities as well as in companies and external training institutes. Vocational further training can also be quite formal, depending on the existence of specially developed curricula and diplomas. Further training on company level is less formal and, consequently, there is less certification. This leads to specific problems with regard to recognition and the transferability of acquired skills to other companies or sectors.

Financing of further training

Preliminary remarks

In all of the countries included in the survey, further training is financed on the basis of a combined system - state funding from tax revenue, funds set up by law or collective agreement, and private funding by companies as well as by those participating in further training measures. The specific characteristics of the funding regulations depend on the respective political and social framework as well as on the system of industrial relations. The "shares" which the above sources contribute towards overall funding vary according to the type of training measures and the target groups. The level of interest in society as a whole and among the companies and participants in specific training measures also plays a role. The following basic pattern of funding is observed in all of the countries:

- further training for the unemployed is mostly funded from the state labour market policy budget (even though it is partly funded by contributions from employees and/or employers);
- company-based further training is mainly financed by the companies, although there are supplementary funding regulations based on collective agreements in many countries; however, these regulations are generally not of a nationwide character but limited to specific sectors;
- those who choose to undergo further training of their own choice mainly pay for the courses themselves; however, in several countries there are collective agreement-based or intra-company regulations on (partial) reimbursement.

Wherever a further training measure is funded from several different coffers, we often speak of "co-financing" or "co-investment". This term is used particularly frequently when employers and employers split the costs of further training according to agreed or stipulated criteria. Co-financing (in the form of money or time) has always been widespread in practice; in recent years, sporadic collective agreement-based regulations have been adopted which stipulate the size of the cost burden and the form in which contributions are made. Employees or employee organisations make a contribution to the cost of intra-company further training either in the form of money or in the form of time. This type of system is used by trade unions in various countries as a means of exercising influence on the structures and contents of further training. Under certain circumstances, this also ensures that the interests of the individual in further training are also taken into account, since if the employer is solely responsible for funding courses, the interests of the individual play only a secondary role compared to the interests of the company.

Funding regulations are normally linked to regulations on the organisation and implementation of further training measures. Collective agreement-based regulations are often implemented by parity-based institutions made up of employers and trade unions.

The following section looks at the specific characteristics of funding in the various member states of the EU.

Belgium

In 1988, the national collective agreement stipulated a new levy on the companies of 0.18% of the payroll sum to be paid into a national fund to finance training measures for risk groups on the labour market; this levy subsequently became law. The quota has meanwhile been raised to 0.25% and the money is also used to fund the vocational further training of those in employment. Since 1990, the criteria for (intra-company and external) risk groups have been defined in sector agreements.

In the sectors of the economy in which employers and trade unions have expressed the wish to manage the levies on sector level themselves (sectoral agreements), the companies are released from the obligation to make payments to the national fund. Sector funds managed jointly by employers and trade unions currently exist in the construction, banking and metalworking sectors.

Denmark

The Danish model of further training was originally characterised by extensive state funding. Then, on January 1, 1994, new legislation introduced a form of co-financing where employees are subject to a levy of 5% on their earnings as a contribution to the costs of further training funded by the state; a levy on employers is not to be introduced until 1998.

Germany

The companies make the biggest contribution to the funding of vocational further training in Germany. The area of training and retraining for the unemployed or those threatened by unemployment is mainly funded by the Federal Labour Office within the context of state labour market policy. The Federal Labour Office is in turn funded from equal contributions paid by employees and employers as well as by the state. The only two sectors in which collective agreement-based regulations exist on the funding of vocational training are construction (for training within the context of the "dual system") and scaffolding (for further training geared towards the attainment of a recognised qualification). There are also agreements on company level governing the contribution of employees to their further training within the company.

Greece

In Greece, the collective agreement of 1988 introduced a further training levy on companies for the first time; the funds raised through this levy were to be used by the OAED Labour Office to promote vocational further training measures. In the collective agreements of following years, employers and trade unions developed this system of funding further; in 1994 a new law provided for the setting up of two funds managed by the Labour Office - one for the vocational further training of those in employment (ELPEKE), to which the employers contribute 0.45% of the payroll sum, and a fund for measures to combat unemployment (EKLA) to which employers contribute 0.5% of the payroll sum and employees make a 0.2% contribution. An administrative board was set up with nine members (four representatives of the employers and four trade union representatives as well as the Director of the OAED Labour Office).

The Greek Trade Union Federation (the GSEE) also attaches importance to ensuring that the fund is not only used to finance further training for those already in employment but also for the training of risk groups in order to improve their prospects on the labour market. The GSEE is therefore calling for a further increase in the levy. However, the GSEE also expects the employees to pay a levy accounting for around 25% of the total fund capital in the future. This should increase the influence of the GSEE when it comes to deciding in which areas the money is to be spent. The trade unions are also calling for greater sector orientation of the fund-financed system of vocational further training.

Spain

In Spain there is a statutory vocational training levy to finance activities in the area of further training. This levy was originally used to finance training measures for the unemployed and those new to the labour market and was collected together with the social insurance contribution (Quota de Formación Profesional). In line with this system, the employers paid a levy of 0.6% and the employees 0.1% of their earnings into the INEM (Instituto Nacional de Empleo). In 1992, a central further training agreement was concluded by the state, the employers and the trade unions which stipulated that the 0.1% levy is to be used for the vocational training of those already in employment (i.e. not for the unemployed or newcomers to the labour market) and is to be increased to 0.4% by 1998. There are special regulations for the implementation of this agreement in the autonomous Basque region.

France

Companies with at least 10 employees are obliged to contribute at least 1.5% of the payroll sum to a fund to finance further training. Companies which provide proof of intra-company expenditure within the context of their own training programmes may be (partially) released from the obligation to pay this levy. The contributions of the companies are paid into funds on various levels (sector-specific, regional or cross-sector), some of which are managed on an equal-representation basis. Employers and trade unions have also concluded agreements which integrate companies with fewer than 10 employees in the system for the funding of further training. These companies pay 0.15% of their payroll sum into jointly managed funds, which are responsible for the collection and administration of the contributions but not for the organisation of training measures. These funds also include the 94 so-called "further training insurance funds" (FAF).

One typical feature of the situation in France is that the legal regulations are based on collective agreements between employers and trade unions which are then incorporated in national legislation and therefore become generally binding (interaction of legal and collective regulations). Employers and trade unions are then responsible for implementing these agreements, although the principle of joint responsibility does not apply in all sectors. Collective agreements on further training on company level are almost non-existent.

The funds are mainly used to finance training leave and measures to integrate newcomers to the labour market. This does not mean, however, that further training measures are financed solely by the funds - particularly in view of the fact that the capital would not be sufficient. Applications for training leave are approved or refused by the parity-based organisations according to priority criteria. In line with the "co-investment" principle, it has also been agreed that a further training course within the context of an intra-company training plan which lasts at least 300 hours, which leads to a recognised qualification, and which is funded to the tune of 25% by the employer can take place in an employee's leisure time.

Alongside this system of funds, the state also provides assistance through the special fund for the restructuring of companies (Fonds National de l'Emploi).

Ireland

The cost of company-based vocational further training is mainly borne by the companies. In some sectors (construction, hotels and tourism), "Levy-Grant systems" are currently being set up to finance further training. In the construction sector, the employers pay a levy of 1.25% of the payroll sum to the state training and further training organisation (the FAS) via the Construction Industry Training Committee; the FAS reimburses the companies for proven expenditure on training and further training measures.

Italy

The National Regional Fund - which is mainly financed from the unemployment insurance system and the structural fund of the European Union as well as by subsidies from the regions - finances the further training measures organised by the regional governments (mainly geared towards helping young people and the unemployed). In 1994 the trade unions and the federation of small and medium-sized companies reached agreement on the creation of a joint fund on regional level to finance further training measures; this fund is to be managed in line with the models in other European countries.

Luxembourg

Several financing models for vocational further training co-exist in Luxembourg. Depending on the case in question, courses may be financed from subsidies from various Ministries, by the company alone, or jointly by employees and employers (courses during or outside regular working hours). The companies are mainly responsible for financing the further training of their employees. The state pays for retraining and further training measures and general educational courses as well as for the training measures organised for specific companies by the chambers of industry. The employees are represented on the management bodies of the chambers.

In some sectors (banking, retail, airlines, leisure industry, iron and steel), there are collective agreements on the joint financing of further training ("co-investment") - for example, when it comes to approving courses attended during training leave. "Co-investment" is also the focal point of a planned law on the organisation of further training which provides for the financing of further training costs by three parties - the companies, the employees and the state. The investments made by companies and employees are to be safeguarded against misuse by the other side (e.g. repayment obligation in the event of violation of the employment contract).

The Netherlands

In the Netherlands, there are jointly managed funds for the financing of initial training and further training (training and development funds) in several sectors as well as on regional level. The size of the contribution made by the companies is laid down in the collective negotiations between employers and trade unions (between 0.2% and 0.8% of the payroll sum). The state subsidies for apprenticeship training are also paid into these funds. The fund committees try to ensure that the money is fairly distributed and that the companies draw up systematic training schedules. The state also pays for the further training of the unemployed and generally makes subsidies or financial assistance available to the companies and the employees involved in further training measures.

Portugal

In contrast to courses geared towards initial vocational training, which are financed by the state, further training of employees is mainly financed by the companies alone. Nevertheless, both the employees and the employer pay a standard contribution (TSU) to finance the training system.

United Kingdom

In the UK, there are no general legal or collective agreement-based regulations on financing. In the recent past, however, agreements have been concluded in some companies which also contain stipulations on the financing of training measures. The state pays some of the training and further training costs for the long-term unemployed, "problem groups" and certain groups of young people. On local level, there are also models for career development based on personal loans (Career Development Loans).

Austria

The financing of further training in Austria is not the subject of collective agreements. There are, however, special regulations in some sectors which are undergoing structural change: in the steel, coal and printing industries, for example, foundations have been set up to cushion the effects of redundancy and to provide further training measures for the affected employees to improve their prospects on the labour market. These foundations are financed from the state labour market policy budget, by the companies, and from "solidarity contributions" paid by those in employment, who pay 1% of their gross earnings into the foundation for a period of three years.

Sweden

In Sweden company-based funds ("renewal funds") were set up at the end of the eighties in the private sector on the basis of collective agreements. These funds were financed by "creaming off" the wage increases of employees and the profits of the companies. These funds were used to finance intra-company measures geared towards the development of personnel resources, further training and research. A similar agreement was concluded in the public sector in 1991. As in most other European countries, the expanded system of further training within the context of labour market policy is financed by the state.

Finland

On the basis of a long-standing agreement between employers and trade unions, time spent attending further training courses within the context of intra-company personnel development measures is generally treated as working time and paid accordingly. There is also a system whereby the employer pays part of the cost of a further training course chosen by the employee, although this is subject to negotiation with the employer in question. A new financial assistance scheme was introduced by agreement in 1989 and will be in the trial phase until the end of 1995 - the "fund for vocational training and compensation payment". During the initial phase, payments were made to long-term unemployed persons who took part in further training. From 1991 onwards, subsidies were also available to employees who had worked for at least one year, were older than 30, and took part in vocational further training courses during training leave. This financial assistance supplements the subsidies from the state unemployment benefit system and is geared towards motivating people to take part in further training measures. These subsidies are financed from contributions by employers to the compulsory supplementary unemployment insurance system which is jointly managed by the employers and the trade unions.